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WORKERS' FRONT

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TO
JEANNE AND JOAQUIN MAURIN

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CHAPTER I

THE DEATH-THROES OF CAPITALISM

EVERY Socialist who sees things realistically must be profoundly disturbed by the present condition of the British Labour movement. It is weak in leadership, divided in organization and without either the spirit or the policy necessary to meet the demands of the time. The spirit of the movement has never recovered from the industrial defeat of 1926 and the political humiliation of 1931.

In other countries the Labour Movement, even where it shows greater popular success, is compromising and confused. Sometimes it occupies high positions in governments, but nowhere is there the policy or leadership which promises the fundamental changes in society which Socialism involves.

This ineptitude is all the more disastrous because of the clamant need at this moment of a movement competent to deal with the urgent tasks which face it. They are more urgent than ever before. We are living in a period of repeated economic crises, of constant danger of war, and of a growing menace from Fascism. These evils, affecting millions of people, demand of the Labour Movement a more vigorous and unified action than at any period in its history.

Capitalism has always doomed people to poverty, but never before has its economic failure been so glaring and inexcusable. Despite the conquest of Nature, yielding resources in superfluity, despite the discovery of electrical

power and the development of methods of production which have solved the problem of providing sufficient wealth to meet human needs, despite the rapidity and thoroughness of present-day transport linking the peoples of the world together, masses of the earth's population never escape from poverty, and recurring trade depressions periodically thrust millions more into the economic abyss.

Capitalism has always threatened war, but never before has the danger been so extensive or terrible. The victory of the Allies in the last war was to have overthrown militarism and ended war for all time, yet there are more men in the military forces than there were before the war, and the Powers are piling up armaments for a still more destructive holocaust which may burst upon us at any moment.

Capitalism has always practised tyranny, but never before has the suppression of liberty been so open or widespread. A large part of Europe has already passed under Fascist dictatorship and in every country the tendencies towards Fascism grow.

Unless the Socialist cause can organize its forces rapidly and effectively to meet these evils and dangers, the prospect is that the peoples will go down to hunger, massacre and slavery.

But this is not only a period of disaster and danger. It is also a period of great opportunity. The constant economic crises of Capitalism, the threat of war, and the spread of Fascism reflect the deepening failure of the present economic system. They represent the end of the era of Capitalism as a tolerable or even a workable human institution. They are the cost of the continuation of Capitalism, and reflect its weakness. This failure of Capitalism, this tottering condition which it has reached, call the Socialist movement to a supreme effort to overthrow it.

From the days of Karl Marx onwards Socialists have

prophesied that Capitalism would decay in this manner. They saw that it would move forward to economic deadlock, war and the iron heel. We have now reached the stage of permanent crisis within Capitalism which they foresaw. The tremendous events of the last twenty years—the World War, the Social Revolution in Russia, the resort to Fascism to crush the Socialist movement in Central Europe, the new Imperialism of Italy in Abyssinia, and of Japan in the Far East, the challenge of Germany under economic pressure to the “have” nations, the unprecedented rearmament programme of Britain and of other countries, the struggle in Spain—all these are part of the drama of the death of one system and the birth of another.

The hopeless alternatives which Capitalism offers for the coming years are to-day evident to all who pause and think for a moment. The world appears to be experiencing economic recovery, but it is only necessary to probe a little below the surface to realize how illusory is this appearance of convalescence. The flush and colour on the body politic reflect a fever arising from a deep-seated disease rather than the glow of health. The recovery is due partly to the fact that we have reached the upward turn in one of the cycles of depression and boom which are a feature of Capitalism, but it is also due to something more significant.

It is the rearmament expenditure of Britain and other countries which is largely bringing this false prosperity. Employment in the war industries is providing wages for thousands who were workless, and their expenditure upon food and clothing and other goods and services is making demands on a wider and wider circle of industries. The scope of war industries is enormous, including not only engineering, which extends from munitions to aeroplanes, but also to the chemical and textile industries, as well as to steel and to coal and other raw materials. The effects

of the gigantic orders for arms reach almost every section of the community.

But where is this new and titanic armaments rivalry between the nations driving us? The British Parliament has authorized expenditure on preparations for the next war as costly as the whole expenditure upon the Boer War at the beginning of the century, and almost as great as the burden of one year of Britain's colossal expenditure during the World War of 1914-18. The proportionate expenditure of a number of other countries on armaments is similar. If this rivalry continues and grows, another world war is inevitable—a war beginning perhaps in Europe or the Far East but spreading over the whole earth's surface, including America, despite its passion for isolation. Ten million men were killed on the field of battle in the last war, and thirty million additional lives were lost in direct consequence of it. Who can calculate the number who would die with the more deadly weapons now being prepared for the coming war and with the wider devastation which it would cause?

World-wide massacre is one of the alternatives which Capitalism offers in the immediate future. This terrible prospect represents one of the death-throes of the present economic system. In dying, Capitalism threatens the death of millions.

But there is a second alternative. When Mr. Neville Chamberlain introduced the British Government's rearmament programme in the House of Commons, he spoke with reserved hopefulness of the possibility of international tension being lessened, so that it might not be necessary to maintain the scale of rearmament planned. The Statutory Commission on Unemployment has indicated what would happen then.

It estimates that even without any modification of

the Government's present plans, unemployment, as soon as the first intensified period of armament manufacture has passed, will grow, from the percentage of approximately eleven, to a percentage of between sixteen and seventeen. In other words, unemployment figures will leap up to two million and more. This increase is expected within a year.

This is the prospect without any modification of the rearmament programme. If there is any substantial reduction owing to some international agreement, unemployment will mount still higher. Sir William Beveridge, Chairman of the Statutory Commission, visualizes three million unemployed under such circumstances, and Mr. Lloyd George puts the figure at four million.

Thus it becomes evident that Capitalism offers us two futures, both disastrous to the human race—either war or economic collapse. It holds out no other hope. Millions of men are either to become cannon fodder or to be thrown on the scrap-heap.

The people seem to be drugged into a fatalistic acceptance of the inevitability of these disasters of decaying Capitalism; yet, if Capitalism were overthrown, they would be demonstrably unnecessary.

It is now technically possible to provide the conditions of security and comfort for all; there is no need either to fight for the wealth of the world or to face economic collapse.

When Sir Arthur Salter was Director of the Economic and Finance Department of the League of Nations he reported that the returns received from all over the world showed that the available natural resources, industrial equipment, transport, technical skill and labour power were sufficient to remove material want from the face of the earth. Considering the condition of semi-starvation in which millions of peasants in South-Eastern Europe,

Asia and Africa constantly live, this is a very remarkable statement. It means that the possibilities are now within our grasp to revolutionize the conditions of life of the greater part of the population of the earth. It means that the material conditions are present to enable us to end the present era of want and war ; it is only the will which is lacking, the will and the clothing of that will in an organization competent for the task, behind a programme and policy capable of its achievement.

It is difficult to believe that this generation will be content to pass to the end of its span tolerating unnecessary poverty and facing the prospect of murderous wars (due to the continuation of an economic system which has lived its day) when the possibilities exist of plenty and peace in a new economic system. Sooner or later the Socialist movement will make itself capable of the task of ending the present and beginning the new era.

War or economic collapse—these are inherent in the continuance of the Capitalist system. They will happen, not by the conscious desire of the Capitalist class, not because of the viciousness or callousness of any particular rulers, but because the sheer drive of the forces within Capitalism in its decaying stage make them inevitable.

The third great evil of this period—the menace of Fascism—reflects not only the fruition of economic developments, but also the conscious determination of the possessing class, panic-stricken by the evidence on every side that the social system which has given them wealth and power is tottering, to maintain their privileges at all costs.

There was a time when people regarded Fascism as a racial trait or as the reflection of conditions isolated in a particular area. I remember a meeting of the Executive of the Labour and Socialist International only three years before the triumph of Hitler when Otto Wels, the leader

of the German Social-Democratic Party, ridiculed the idea that Germany could become Fascist. He pointed to the illiteracy of the Italian peasants, the concentration of the organized working-class movement in the industrial north, and the general weakness of the Socialist forces in Italy. He contrasted the conditions in Germany, where the Socialist Movement was the most powerful in the world, had the largest vote and Parliamentary party, the biggest trade union organization, and where it permeated the whole of the State and the economic life of the nation. He declared with confidence that Fascism would not triumph in Germany. Otto Wels is now a refugee in Prague, and the price of his crossing the German frontier would be a concentration camp.

Since then Fascism has spread alarmingly. It has overthrown even the Socialist stronghold of Red Vienna and established itself firmly throughout Austria. To a large degree Fascist methods operate in the administration of Poland, Hungary, and the Balkan countries. They are being applied in far-away Japan and in the States of South America. There is hardly a country in the world outside Soviet Russia where there is not a Fascist movement and where Fascist tendencies are not visible.

In Britain the danger of Fascism lies not so much in Oswald Mosley and the British Union of Fascists as in the inevitable tendencies of the parties determined at any price to maintain the Capitalist system to resort to the suppression of liberties and the limitation of organizations which might be used to overthrow Capitalism. The first clear instance of this was the Trades Disputes Act of 1927, introduced after the General Strike of 1926, which so terrified the possessing class. It included provisions to prohibit trade unions from engaging in sympathetic strikes or in strikes for political purposes, such as resistance to war.

During more recent years we have had the introduction of officer-class recruits to the police and the militarization of the force, the Incitement to Disaffection Act, and the Public Order Act, skilfully introduced under the circumstances of Fascist-provoked disorders in the East end of London to place provisions on the Statute Book which give the authorities power to suppress working-class agitation.

All these measures are clearly preparatory to a critical situation which the British ruling class foresee. There was no immediate need to reorganize or militarize the police force ; it was fulfilling its task of preventing and discovering crime more efficiently than any police force in the world. The only justification which the Minister responsible for the introduction of the Incitement to Disaffection Act could cite was an alleged incident where a parcel of seditious leaflets had been thrown over a barrack wall, and since its introduction there has been only one charge under its provisions, and that was the case of a wretched boy of eighteen who was sentenced to imprisonment for a year for ingenuously seducing a Royal Air Force pilot, who deliberately encouraged him, to fly his machine to Spain ! The first immediate result of the Public Order Act was to compel Fascists to wear their black shirts under their waistcoats and to cause members of the I.L.P. Guild of Youth and the Young Communist League to put their red and khaki shirts into cold storage ; but also in cold storage are the clauses of the Act which give the police the power to prohibit processions and demonstrations, and to disintegrate working-class organizations with their spies.

These measures constitute Fascist legislation in advance of a Fascist situation. They are on the Statute Book, but it is not yet necessary for the possessing class to apply them in order to defend their possessions. They are there ready for the day.

When these Fascist developments are so universal they cannot be regarded as incidental or accidental ; no less than the constant threat of war and of economic collapse, they are clearly an expression of the stage which the present economic system has reached.

But it is important to understand the difference already noted. War and economic collapse represent the inherent failure and disaster of continued Capitalism. Fascism represents a conscious effort by the possessing class to maintain Capitalism. Fascism is their last desperate effort to prolong the existence of a decaying system, because their own power and privilege are bound up with it. Despite all the melodrama of a strong man, a strong hand, and strong action which accompanies Fascism, it reveals the weakness of Capitalism. The possessing class is compelled to destroy democratic institutions and suppress working-class organizations because this is the only method by which Capitalism, with its glaring failure to meet human needs, and its danger to the peace of the world, can be retained.

That the possessing class should have to impose tyrannies and barbarities which offend the sense of liberty, and the decencies and the culture which have evolved during the centuries of civilizing progress, is not only a final condemnation of Capitalism, but a revelation of the desperate straits which it has reached. It calls for a Socialist Movement which will not be content to defend the status quo, which certainly will not be content to retreat to the defence of rights won during the last century, but which will challengingly go forward to overthrow Capitalism and to establish Socialism.

This state of the world is not only a tragedy ; it provides a great opportunity. The objective conditions for the ending of one era and for the beginning of another are here.

All that is required is a Labour movement capable of ending and burying the Capitalist system and bringing to birth and nourishing the new Socialist society.

The Labour movement at the present time is not capable of this. It does not possess the vitality, courage, clear-mindedness, unity or creative power out of which a new civilization can come. The most important duty of this period is to understand why the Labour movement is lacking in the necessary qualities, and to strive to make it a competent instrument powerful and efficient for the task.

CHAPTER II

THE SICKNESS OF THE LABOUR MOVEMENT

Is THE valuation made in the previous chapter of the condition of the working-class movement too pessimistic? I doubt whether even the officials of Transport House, London, or the Maison du Peuple, Brussels (the headquarters respectively of British and International Labour), would regard it as exaggerated if they expressed their real convictions. The facts are too evident. Consider the British Working-class Movement.

The National Government is the most dangerous anti-working-class combination which has ever ruled in Britain. It began office as an anti-working-class conspiracy, facilitated by the desertion of Labour leaders who had been trusted. It saved British Capitalism, and particularly the interests of British Finance, by savage attacks on the standard of life of the workers. Under the nauseating slogan "Equality of Sacrifice" it cut the starvation allowances of the unemployed and the luxury incomes of the rich by the same ten per cent., and pretended that this was justice. It introduced the cruel Means Test for the unemployed, which it still maintains, although all other "cuts" have been restored, and later, it attempted to impose still further reductions explaining when faced with revolt that it was all a mistake! It safeguarded the profits of the wealthy at the expense of the stomachs of the poor.

It has introduced the preparatory Fascist legislation already described. In foreign affairs it has preserved and

strengthened Britain's reputation for hypocrisy by its actions in relation to Manchuria, Abyssinia and Spain. At the last General Election its Prime Minister assured the voters that there was no intention of introducing a large-scale rearmament programme, and then, a year later, announcing the largest rearmament programme the world has ever seen, calmly explained that he had deliberately misled the electorate because he feared they would vote against him if they knew his true intentions ! The whole record of the National Government reveals it as a menace to the workers, to peace, and to liberty.

And yet the official Labour Movement shows no fight against it. In the early days of the National Government the Labour Party was handicapped by the fact that during its own period of office it had been prepared to compromise so disastrously that it could not logically resist legislation which applied its own decisions ; but even when that difficult period had passed the Labour Opposition displayed no fight. To the rearmament programme, the official Labour leadership has made no challenging opposition. It has criticized incidentals—the Government's vacillating policy in relation to the League of Nations, its loans policy, the absence of proper safeguards against profiteering—but it has refrained from forthright resistance, it did not vote against the programme as a whole. It never dreamed of saying : " You are a Capitalist Government, the enemy of the working class ; we will not vote you arms, because you will use them for Capitalist interests and against the interests of the working class." Its criticism has been so restricted that Mr. Neville Chamberlain was able to say with truth that the Labour opposition was not fundamental but only on minor matters. The truth is that the Parliamentary leaders are not representatives of a working-class movement exposing, denouncing, resisting a coercive and

menacing instrument of the Capitalist class, but polite, professional politicians playing the accepted political game.

Led with such feebleness, it was inevitable that the fight should go out of the political Labour Movement in the country. Despite the challenge of five years of reactionary Government, the Labour Party Conference in the autumn of 1936 was the most dispiriting and inept in the history of the Party, and the Conference of 1937 actually decided to support rearmament. The Capitalist press rejoiced. The Capitalist class has nothing to fear from such a working-class Movement.

Vitality has gone out of the Party in the country. Over great areas no regular political work is done. It is a common experience to find that those who were enthusiasts have lost hope and retired into inaction. When the leaders address meetings they often have audiences of merely a few hundred, listless and unresponsive—even the Party leader and ex-Cabinet Ministers frequently undergo this experience. The Party is spiritually dead.

This condition of things is not entirely a matter of wrong policy. A wrong policy can be pursued and enthusiasm can be maintained temporarily; but, wrong or right, the leadership and membership must believe in the line of a Party if there is to be vitality in it, the leaders must be inspired by it and have the ability to inspire their followers. The worst reflection of the sickness which has now devitalized the British Labour Movement is the cynicism of both leaders and members. The leaders and officials show no will to win power, and give the impression that they do not desire it. The members, not unnaturally, have little confidence in their leaders.

There is one part of the country where the general debility of the Labour Party is less evident, and that is London. No revolutionary Socialist would endorse the

policy of Mr. Herbert Morrison, the leader of the Party on the London County Council, but the remarkable victories gained in March, 1937, were in striking contrast to the rest of the country. If Mr. Morrison were the national leader of the Labour Party, his attitude of faith in himself and in his policy, would doubtless breathe some life into the Party for a time. But the sickness goes deeper than that. There is a widespread realization that the Labour Movement has departed from its purpose, "got on the wrong track", and lost sight of its principles; in consequence it is failing inevitably to express the instinctive desires of the workers and to arouse spontaneous enthusiasm among them.

The measure of the failing of the Labour Movement on its political side is shown in the Parliamentary bye-election results. With all the anti-working-class, pro-Fascist, and war-preparation record of the National Government, the Labour vote in the constituencies is less than it was in 1929, eight years ago. The National Government is accordingly becoming contemptuous of the Labour Party's public support. Members of Parliament with ambitions for posts as Judges and Colonial Governors used to regard their chances of appointment as hopeless unless they had majorities of five thousand and more; they knew that the Government would not risk political defeats in the bye-elections which their transference to non-Parliamentary posts would involve. But now the National Government appreciates that it can face safely bye-elections where the majorities are comparatively small. The young Tory careerists can indulge their hopes even though they represent constituencies which in the past have been Labour seats.

On the industrial side of the Movement there is the same weakness. The Trade Union leaders have never recovered from the disastrous repulse which they suffered in the General Strike of 1926. The mood of defeatism and

retreat has remained with them. During the years of trade depression the absence of aggressive action in the Trade Union Movement on issues of wages and working conditions had some justification ; but the tranquillity of trade unionism has not been a matter merely of keeping the powder dry and waiting for a better day. The will of the leadership to fight has gone, the sense of antagonism to the Capitalist class has disappeared. Instead of the Trade Union Movement being regarded as an instrument of the class struggle, instead of the Capitalist class being regarded as an industrial enemy, the leadership has turned to a policy of making the Unions instruments of collaboration with the Capitalist class. It was quite natural for Sir Walter Citrine, the supreme official of the British Trade Union Movement, to accept a knighthood from the National Government, and it was quite natural for the National Government to bestow it on him, because of his services to the cause of peace in industry.

How deeply this departure from the basis of the class struggle has gone was shown when industrial recovery began to return to Britain as a result of the vast rearmament programme. The rearmament programme gave the Trade Union Movement a tremendous opportunity. Historically, periods of industrial recovery have always been the periods of aggressive trade union action. On this occasion there was a double opportunity : the need of the Government was added to the desire of the employers to take full profit-making advantage of the upward economic trend. A fighting trade union leadership would have used this situation to compel the Government, because of its urgent need for arms, to exert an influence on the employing class to make concessions.

It has been argued that the public sense of the urgency of rearmament prevented the trade union movement from

taking advantage of the needs of the Government, that public psychology would have been against it. During the World War public opinion in Britain was overwhelmingly on the side of the Government and the prosecution of the War, yet the working class was able to win standards of wages and a degree of control in the factories never before reached and never attained since. Particularly in the Glasgow area, where the leadership maintained an attitude of fight, the standard of wages and the powers of the shop stewards elected by the workers mounted to a peak point. The existence of the class war was recognized despite the fact that the nation itself was at war. The feeling was given emphatic expression in a song of the Clyde Workers' Committee which deserves reproduction—

Oh, I'm Henry Dubb
And I won't go to war
Because I don't know
What they're all fighting for.

*To Hell with the Kaiser
To Hell with the Czar,
To Hell with Lord Derby,
And also G.R.*

I work at munitions,
I'm a slave down at Weir's.
If I leave my job
They give me two years.

*To Hell with the Sheriff,
To Hell with his crew;
To Hell with Lloyd George
And Henderson too.*

I don't like the factor.
His rent I won't pay.
Three cheers for John Wheatley,
I'm striking to-day.

*To Hell with the landlord,
I'm not one to grouse,
But to Hell with both him
And his bloody old house.¹*

It is not suggested that the temper of this song was the temper of the Labour leadership during the war, but the fact that the Glasgow engineers sang it illustrates the possibility even in a state of national emergency of developing a vigorous class struggle feeling against the employing class and the Government. No one will suggest that the rearmament programme of 1937 has behind it the sentiment of national unity which existed in the World War, and a fighting Labour leadership could have taken advantage of the requirements of the Government to re-inspire the whole trade union movement to win big concessions both in conditions and control.

The rank and file of the Trade Union Movement has not been so spiritless as the leadership. As soon as the trade depression began to pass, strikes broke out, and as the economic recovery proceeded they grew in number. But in nearly every case they were unofficial strikes, started spontaneously by the workers and almost invariably disowned by the trade union officials. In many industries the strikes were begun by unorganized workers. A noteworthy example of this was at Glasgow, where no fewer than eight thousand apprentices in the engineering and shipbuilding trades left work to demand wage increases, although they did not belong to trade unions and had no assurance of organized backing.

In some cases the trade union leadership seemed to seek out excuses for refusing to recognize a strike. The dispute of Beardmore's armament works in Glasgow was an illustration of this. When the men made their demands

¹It is of interest to record that the author of this song was James Maxton.

the firm was not a member of the Employers' Federation. The firm then joined, and when the men stopped work claimed that the conciliation machinery provided in the trade union agreement with the Employers' Federation should be applied. Not unnaturally the men felt that they had been tricked. Their District Committee endorsed their decision to remain on strike ; but the National leadership ordered them back to work. It was only after a ballot vote had overwhelmingly supported the strike that the leaders reluctantly gave recognition.

There can be no doubt that the workers are ready for a fighting leadership in their industrial struggle. The fact that so many workers have been prepared to strike without even belonging to a trade union shows the prevalent spirit. It also shows how the movement has failed to convince the workers generally that in order to put up a fight for better conditions their natural place is in the Trades Unions. The official leadership has conducted a platform campaign for recruits, and the membership has increased considerably during recent years. But the best way to enrol members and to make the movement effective for its purpose would have been to express in an aggressive policy the spirit so evident in the rank and file and to seize the opportunity of the industrial recovery to make demands and to mobilize action behind them, which would have inspired the whole working class. The failure of the Trade Union leadership to lead under these advantageous conditions is an indication, no less than the failure on the political side, of the sickness of the British working-class movement.

So much for the British working-class movement. What of it in other countries ?

Outside Germany and Italy, where Fascist repression rules, the British working-class movement is probably more demoralized than any in the world ; but looking round the

international movement we see that nowhere is it making a challenging attack on the Capitalist system. At the best it is making only a fight for certain improvements within Capitalism, or defending political liberties, now challenged by Fascism, but regarded up to a few years ago as accepted achievements of progressing civilization. Apart from a few comparatively small revolutionary parties there is no indication of a realization in the international working-class movement that Capitalism itself is in crisis and that the great historical opportunity to end it, and to make the beginnings of the new era of Socialism, has come.

In Scandinavia and New Zealand the Labour Movement has won political power, but it is satisfied to introduce ameliorations of Capitalism without challenging its basis. In France the working-class movement is giving support to a Liberal-Socialist Coalition Government, but the declared purpose of the Government is to work within the Capitalist system, and many of the concessions won by vigorous industrial action have been neutralized by the increased cost of living. In America there has been a healthy development of trade union action on the basis of class rather than craft, but a working-class movement with the conscious purpose of overthrowing Capitalism hardly exists, and at the last Presidential election the total Socialist and Communist vote actually fell. Even in Soviet Russia, where workers' power was gloriously won in 1917, the increased differentiation of income and the reintroduction of the right of inheritance, indicate a retreat from the classless society of Socialism rather than an advance towards it.

The greatest inspiration of recent months has been the heroic struggle of the Spanish workers; about this we shall have much to say later, but here it is worth pointing out that even in Spain the aim of the official Socialist movement, backed by the Communist Party, has been to

preserve the democratic institutions of Republican Capitalism. It has not recognized Fascism as an evil of Capitalism which can be overcome only by a social revolution ending Capitalism itself.

Everywhere the working-class movement is content at this moment to work within the limits of the Capitalist system. It is so conscious of the dangers of reaction, War, and Fascism that it does not recognize that these are symptoms of the crisis of Capitalism; it concentrates on the task of resisting a particular evil here and a particular evil there, and loses sight of the opportunity of ending the system of whose decay these evils, in their very unprecedented gravity, are an expression.

When we pass from the working class sections in the different countries to the international organization of the working class, the sickness of the movement becomes even more apparent.

There are two large international working-class organizations—the Labour and Socialist International, embracing the Social-Democratic and Labour Parties, and generally known as the Second International, and the Communist International, known as the Third International. Let us put them to the test of their readiness to bury the era which is dying and to inaugurate the era which is crying to be born.

The Second International is no longer an International. It has never acted as a unit, but there was a time when at least its main Parties were united in a common philosophy and tactic. Now the philosophy and tactics of the affiliated Parties vary from the openly revolutionary view of the Austrian Party to the ultra-reformist view of the British Labour Party. The French and Spanish Parties have close alliances with the Communist Parties; the British Party and many others resist proposals for such an alliance as

though Communism were a disease. The French and Spanish Parties have entered into alliances with Liberal Parties in the Popular Front ; other Parties regard alliances with Capitalist Parties as the surrender of the fundamental class basis of the Socialist movement.

These differences are not merely theoretical. Whenever issues demanding action arise they prevent effective action in common. With every year that passes it becomes clearer that if War and Fascism are to be resisted and Capitalism overthrown, it must be by combined international action by the working class across the frontiers, or at least by the working class of other countries going to the support of the working class of any country which is in the vanguard of the struggle ; so long as this chaos of policy remains within the Second International, such common action is not possible.

The Third International is an International in the sense that it is a disciplined unit, but, except in Russia, where it is all-powerful, in France, China, and to a less degree in Spain and Czecho-Slovakia, it does not represent a powerful working class force. Its supreme weakness organizationally is its absence of influence within the mass industrial movements outside the countries named.

We are looking here at working-class organization from the point of view of its readiness to accept the present historic opportunity to end Capitalism. From this point of view the Communist International is leading the retreat. It is so conscious of the menace of Fascism and War, and particularly of the threat of Germany and Japan to Soviet Russia, that it has everywhere called off the struggle to overthrow Capitalism, and has substituted the duty to defend democracy within Capitalism. This is mentioned in passing at this stage : we shall naturally have to revert to it prominently.

Let us put to the whole international working-class movement the test of the conflict in Spain. By every principle of Socialism it was the duty of the entire working-class movement of the world to go to the assistance of the Spanish workers. How woefully it has failed to do it.

The official policy of the Second International was one of non-intervention for nearly a year. In March, 1937, after the conflict in Spain had been proceeding for eight months, an international working-class conference was held in London representing the Parties affiliated to the Second International and the associated trade union organizations. The Spanish delegates appealed to the Conference to support the right of the Spanish Government to arms and to oppose the Non-Intervention Agreement under which Germany and Italy, which from the first had poured men and munitions into Spain for the Fascist rebels, were given duties to patrol the Spanish coast to prevent the entering of volunteers and arms!

Under the leadership of the British delegation the Conference rejected this appeal. It is not surprising that Emil Vandervelde, the veteran Belgian leader, despite his own reactionary record during the World War and at other periods, declared that this represented the death-blow of the Socialist International as an organization. It was only in June, 1937, that the Second International at length repudiated non-intervention.

On the question of intervention the record of the Communist International is better. It was handicapped by the Non-Intervention attitude of Soviet Russia (bound to France by its alliance and through France to Britain) during the first three months of the war in Spain; but subsequently, and until the operation of the international supervision, it provided both arms and technicians to the Spanish Government. Moreover, in all countries the

Communist Parties not only carried on an agitation for lifting the embargo (the agitation was restricted in France owing to the Communist participation in the Popular Front), but organized and contributed many heroic sections to the International Brigade in Spain.

But in judging these actions from the point of view of the question asked in this chapter—how far is the Working-class Movement ready to make the final assault on Capitalism?—this qualification must be added: Communist help in Spain has been limited to the defence of Capitalist democracy against Fascism, and has been used actually to suppress the Revolutionary Socialist Movement which wished to carry on the struggle to the point of social revolution.

The only Parties which have stood for full assistance to the Spanish workers with the object of social revolution have been the Revolutionary Socialist Parties, such as certain Left sections of the Second International, the I.L.P. and other Parties associated with the International Revolutionary Socialist Bureau, certain Communist Opposition groups and the Anarchists. Unfortunately the Revolutionary Socialist sections are comparatively weak.

These are the hard realistic facts about the working-class movement in the present historical crisis when the decay and demoralizations of Capitalism give a supreme opportunity to the workers to go forward to its overthrow and to the winning of power and the use of that power to establish the new order of Socialism.

Why is it that the Movement should be so unequal to its task when its moment of opportunity has come?

CHAPTER III

WHY THIS FAILURE ?

WHERE has the Labour Movement gone wrong ? What are the principles from which it has departed ? Let us re-state briefly the Marxist view of the Capitalist State and of the method by which that State will be transformed into a Socialist State. Then we can test the policies of the working-class movement by it.

Marx showed that the class in society which owns the means of livelihood—the land, industry, transport, finance—determines the character of society. It determines how wealth shall be distributed and accordingly how the various sections of the population shall be fed, clothed and housed. It determines what education shall be available to the various sections of the community. It influences the character of every feature of society—the organization of religion, the press, the arts, even of recreation and sport. Above all, it determines the character of the political structure—the State itself. The State—the Constitution, Parliament (in Britain, the Commons and the Lords, the Cabinet System, the Privy Council, the Monarchy and the Court), the control of the civil service, the police and armed forces, the judiciary, the Established Church—is a reflection of the basic economic structure of society, is an instrument of the dominant class, functions for it, adapts itself to the needs of the dominant class, and must change fundamentally in character as the economic basis of society changes.

Within the present economic system—the Capitalist system—there is a small possessing class which has dominant ownership and control of the means of wealth production. There is a comparatively large section of the community—the middle class—which serves this possessing class in technical ways—the management of industry, the supervision of labour, the development and application of new processes, the administration of the State machine, the officership of the armed forces—and which is rewarded by comfort and security. This middle class tends to become materially associated with the possessing class by the investment of its surplus income in industry and psychologically associated with it by a sense of dependence upon those whom it serves and by whom it is exceptionally rewarded.

These two classes in the community are a minority—at the most thirty per cent. Seventy per cent. of the population is the mass working class, whose livelihood depends upon the sale of its labour to the possessing class, and which exists on a subsistence level—paid wages when employment is available to keep it physically capable of its duties, maintained on a bare existence standard when employment is not available. This class wins concessions from the Capitalist class and from the Capitalist State only as it organizes and fights for them.

But Society progresses from one structure to another, and within each structure there are the seeds of its destruction, the seeds of the emergence of the next form of society. The Capitalist system is developing inevitably both the economic and psychological factors for its own collapse.

The economic collapse of Capitalism is involved in its mal-distribution of wealth. The rich possessing class can purchase freely ; the comfortable middle class can purchase

extensively ; the mass working class can purchase only on a very limited scale. And as the working class compose the great majority of the population, a surplus of unsaleable goods results.

The possessing class then seeks to find markets for its surplus goods in industrially undeveloped territories abroad. A struggle for markets begins between the possessing class of different countries. Thus Imperialism develops—first economic Imperialism, and then the State expression of it, political Empires. Out of the conflict for markets and natural resources come national antagonisms, rivalries in armaments, the danger of war.

But with all these outlets the consumption of goods does not equal the possible production, because of the poverty of the masses of the people in every country. As industry expands, as new technical processes are developed, the margin between consumption and production grows. Modern methods of mass production intensify the problem ; mass production without mass consumption inevitably means mass unemployment. Economic crises follow each other with increasing rapidity and depth and duration.

The whole Capitalist structure is shaken and totters. The struggle for markets becomes keener, and with it armament rivalry and the war danger grow. The possessing class resorts to Fascism to keep an iron hand on a system threatened by chaotic collapse.

Such are the economic factors making for the collapse of Capitalism and driving it towards World War and Fascism.

But there are also psychological factors. The economic structure is peopled with human beings, and when these human beings are divided into classes with privileges for a few, comfort for the many and poverty for the mass, it is inevitable that a class struggle should develop. The workers, suffering common grievances side by side in factory, mine

and mill, begin to take common action to demand redress. Trade Unions develop. A sense of class solidarity and class-consciousness grow. The workers begin to resent the control of the State by the possessing class. They form political parties and win representation in Parliaments.

Among them the more enlightened become Socialists. They realize that their poverty and insecurity are due to the class character of society, the ownership by a few of what is necessary for all, that this is the explanation of the contrasts between wealth and poverty. They see that the State is an organ of the Capitalist class, that war is the consequence of the struggle for markets by the Capitalist class. They begin to organize the working class not merely to demand immediate ameliorations, but to overthrow the Capitalist system and the Capitalist State. They aim at the establishment of a new economic structure, where the means of production, distribution and exchange shall be owned and controlled by the community, and where the whole community will be a working community. They strive for a Workers' State, in which work and not possession shall be the basis of power, where class divisions shall be abolished and wealth shall be evenly distributed.

When the growing economic crisis of Capitalism coincides with the psychological sharpening of the class struggle it becomes necessary for the possessing class to abolish any democratic institutions which the workers might use in their fight for power. Such democratic institutions grew up during the individualistic stage of the development of Capitalism, when the rising industrialist class wanted working-class allies against the old feudal class, and when, in the days before large centralized concerns, the Liberal philosophy that every worker could become an employer was expressed in the demand for political liberty and equality. These democratic features of the Capitalist State were

all very well so long as the workers were prepared to accept Capitalism ; when, however, the class conflict reaches the point of a struggle for power between the working class and the Capitalist class, then democracy becomes a danger to Capitalist society and must be destroyed. And not only the State democratic institutions. So long as self-reliant, self-governing working-class organizations remain they will be a danger. Accordingly advantage must be taken of divisions or weaknesses in the working class to destroy their organizations before they achieve the unity and purpose capable of overthrowing Capitalism. That is the Capitalist *raison d'être* of Fascism.

The class divisions of Capitalism, the class character of the Capitalist State, and the inevitable intensification of the class struggle within Capitalism mean that in the last resort the working class must rely on its own action through its own organizations to overthrow the possessing class, to obtain power, and to carry through the transition from Capitalism to Socialism. The hope that Capitalism can be transformed to Socialism through the means of the Capitalist State—its Parliaments, civil service, armed forces and judiciary—is an illusion. Socialists should use the Constitution of the Capitalist State as fully as possible, get out of it as much as possible, but they should always recognize that finally they must conquer the Capitalist class through their own action and organs, through Workers' Councils or Soviets representing the Trades Unions and other working-class bodies, and in the last resort, if necessary, through their own workers' army (formed perhaps by the coming over of a large part of the State forces) responsible to their Councils or Soviets. Whilst the changed structure of society is being basically completed, these Councils of the workers must be the new governing and administrative authority, suppressing all resistance by the old possessing

class, until the foundations of the new classless society of Socialism are established. This is what is meant by the dictatorship of the proletariat during the transition stage.

This analysis of the nature of the Capitalist State and of the struggle for Socialism indicates two guiding principles for the working-class movement. It must base itself on the class struggle and that struggle must aim at the overthrow of both the economic and political structure of the Capitalist State. There are members of the possessing class who, because of humane feelings, keen intelligence or a sense of justice, recognize its evils and dangers, and identify themselves with those forces which are making for a changed society. But the main drive for this change invariably comes from the class which is denied social and cultural opportunity and suffers from economic injustice. It is no accident that it is the working-class movement, despite all mistakes and failures, which forms the mass basis of the Socialist cause. Imaginative, generous and philosophic individuals in the possessing class may become Socialists. Enlightened and far-seeing sections of the middle class, escaping from the temptation of fawning snobbery and seeing through the false identification of their interests with those of the possessing class, may become Socialists; if the middle class be properly approached, this Socialist support from its ranks may become strong and important. But the central body of the Socialist Movement is inevitably found in the working class, whose bitter daily experience proves the injustices of Capitalism, and the driving force of the Movement is inevitably the daily working-class struggle against those injustices, the fight for improved wages and working conditions, for better treatment of the unemployed, for improved housing conditions and so on. As this instinctive struggle is given intelligent guidance by Socialist convictions, a Movement develops

destined to overthrow the old society and to establish the new order. The class struggle is the very centre of the struggle for Socialism.

From this it follows that the working-class movement will only achieve its purpose if it refuses to compromise the class struggle, if it declines, despite all temptations, to be led to identify itself in any circumstances with the possessing class and its State. Once the working-class movement ties itself to the Capitalist Class or the Capitalist State, the vitality, opportunity and initiative pass from the Socialist struggle. The Socialist salt has lost its savour. Spiritual rot sets in, the fight has gone out of the Movement. Socialism may remain a theoretical aim, but the pressure towards Socialism has gone.

There are many inevitable temptations to compromise in this way. When Trade Unionism becomes powerful and is recognized by the Capitalist class as an instrument for collective bargaining with the workers, there is the temptation to conclude long-term agreements and to set up complicated and delaying "conciliation" machinery which limit the power of working-class action and particularly the right to strike. Circumstances develop where the Trades Unions even come to feel a sense of industrial solidarity with the employers and take common action with them to strengthen their position as against other industries (there was a time when railwaymen identified themselves with the railway companies against the extension of road transport), or to win sectional privileges from the Capitalist State, as, for example, protective tariffs or quotas. Still more deadly is a tendency for Trade Union officials, often removed from the economic struggle of their members and coming, consciously or unconsciously, to regard their jobs as vested interests, to develop a conservative attitude of mind which shrinks from industrial struggle and instinctively

resists suggestions for strike action or the expression in the membership of any militant class spirit against the Capitalist class. The financial resources of the Trades Unions, often invested in Capitalist concerns, and their extensive participation in State services, such as unemployment and health insurance, are another factor in making them administrative organs of Capitalism and the Capitalist State rather than instruments of the class struggle against Capitalism. They tend to become bound up with the present order. When such things happen life begins to depart from the Trade Union Movement. It loses the capacity to fight against the grievances of Capitalism and to act as the driving force to move forward to the overthrow of Capitalism.

There are similar tendencies on the political side. Working-class representatives are elected to posts within the Capitalist State structure. They become Members of Parliament, Justices of the Peace, members of Royal Commissions or of the Boards of public Corporations or of State services like the Ecclesiastical Commissioners or Marketing Boards, or Passenger Transport Boards, or the B.B.C. Sometimes both individuals and parties forget that their purpose is to fight Capitalism and its State and become acclimatized to their surroundings, become in mind and spirit a part of the Capitalist State. Often, indeed, they are unconscious of the character of the Capitalist State ; they take a pride in the honour attached to their positions within it, and never think of regarding themselves as enemies of the whole structure in which they are participating.

In these surroundings they meet and mix with the representatives of the Capitalist Class, find them "good fellows", and fail to differentiate between the self-respect which is prepared to treat anyone and everyone socially as a human equal, and the class-respect which never forgets

that the representatives of the Capitalist class are as such, class enemies. In monarchical countries such as Britain, they become victims of the snobbery which surrounds the Royal Family, take a delight in attending social functions at the Palace (though they generally say that this is a condescension to the weakness of their women folk !), and even adopt Court uniforms in recognition of their august hosts.

These tendencies might be the outcome of the frailties of human nature, undisciplined by a clear and compelling recognition of the class struggle. They would then be objects for individual denunciation, but would not justify a denunciation of a general line of policy. Unfortunately, however, they reflect a general line of policy. The betrayal goes much further and deeper than the weaknesses of individuals. It expresses a fundamental failure to conduct the working-class movement on the basis of the class struggle.

It would be possible to go back to the beginning of the working-class movement and to show how mass uprisings of the workers have constantly failed in their purpose, and lost their inspirational drive by the compromises with the Capitalist class or the Capitalist State which have crept into them. The Chartist Movement was an example. But it will be enough for our purpose to take the modern development of the Movement—say from the time of the World War.

Before the War there were repeated discussions within the International Working-class Movement as to the attitude which should be adopted in time of war. Jules Guesde of the French Socialist Party and Keir Hardie of the British I.L.P. were foremost in urging that the workers should refuse to identify themselves with their national Capitalist States and should declare their international solidarity

by refusing to slaughter each other at the command of their Capitalist Governments, and initiating an international general strike across the frontiers to make the prosecution of war impossible.

This view was rejected by the majority of the parties in the International, partly because many of them took the view that "national defence" was justified, and partly because it was urged that such a decision would make the German Social-Democratic Party, then the largest, and certain other parties, illegal organizations.

When the threat of war drew near in the summer of 1914, the Working-class Parties organized great demonstrations against it. On the Sunday before the declaration of war vast meetings expressing international working-class solidarity were held in all the Capitals of Europe. But before a week had passed in almost every case the working-class parties had identified themselves with their National Capitalist States. They justified this course in every case on the ground that their Governments were engaged in a war of "national defence", and in every case they had some justification for their action on this principle because all the Governments involved had some reason for arguing that the enemy Governments were the aggressors, and because once the war began it became inevitably a war of national defence for all the countries involved.

At first in most countries the working-class parties maintained their independence whilst giving support to their Governments. In Britain, for example, the Labour Party and Trades Union Congress began by concentrating upon putting forward claims for working-class rights—the restriction of war profiteering, higher wages to meet advancing prices, the restriction of rent increases, the proper organization and distribution of food supplies, adequate allowances for the dependents of soldiers, and so on. But

rapidly and progressively the independence of the movement was surrendered. Working-class representatives were drawn into the administration of the State war organization. They began to serve on the numberless Boards which were set up to deal both with the civil and military organization of the war. After a time, Governments of National Unity were formed in which the working-class parties participated. In Britain Labour Party representatives entered the War Government, and Mr. Arthur Henderson represented it in the War Cabinet of Five. On the political side at least the whole basis of the class struggle was forgotten. The working-class became identified with the Capitalist State and its defence.

Even the class struggle on the industrial field was modified as much as possible by the influence of the Trades Union Congress leadership. It was maintained only in the workshops by the growth of the Shop Steward Movement, and among the miners by the militant leadership of Mr. Robert Smillie, President of the Miners' Federation and a member of the I.L.P. (which persisted in its opposition to the war), though afterwards Mr. Lloyd George succeeded in making an agreement with the miners which limited their scope of independence and aggression. Glasgow was the one centre of the country where Mr. Lloyd George failed to bring the workers to heel.

There were certain working-class Parties which did not surrender the class struggle in this way, and which refused to identify themselves with the Capitalist class and Capitalist State of their own countries. In Britain the I.L.P. was practically alone ; its group of five members in the House of Commons, supported by one or two dissentient Liberals, became the only Opposition. In Germany a fairly strong minority in the Social Democratic Party opposed the "national defence" line ; they broke away from the main

body and became known as the Independent Socialist Party. In France and Austria there were also strong minorities which actually became majorities before the end of the war. In Italy the Socialist Party unitedly opposed the war from the beginning ; when Mussolini "ratted" he was immediately expelled from the Party, and he had no following within it. In Czarist Russia there was a brave minority which opposed the war, but its effective leaders, like Lenin and Trotsky, were exiled in other countries.

These anti-war parties, however, did not all take the logical class struggle view. Some of them, whilst opposed to the war on the basis of international class solidarity, were not prepared to carry their opposition to national unity to the stage of advocating social revolution in each country as the Socialist method of ending the war. Despite Governmental opposition, two international conferences of the anti-war parties were held, one at Brienthal, the other at Zimmerwalde. These gatherings were not fully representative—to cross the frontiers proved impossible for some of the delegates, including the representatives of the I.L.P.—but they were of great historical importance because they threw up sharply the conflict of policy within the working-class movement and defined clearly the difference between the lines of class struggle and "social patriotism" (to use the phrase which Lenin applied to the "national unity" attitude), and because they proved preliminary to the formation of the Communist (or Third) International.

Lenin at these conferences strongly opposed not only the line of working-class collaboration with the Capitalist Parties for national defence, but working-class pressure upon the Capitalist Governments to end the war through "peace by negotiation". Such a peace, concluded by Capitalist Governments, would be an Imperialist peace. It would be unjust and would be a prelude to another war. The

correct Socialist policy, he urged, was working-class action independent of Capitalist Governments—working-class action in each country to bring down its particular government by social revolution and the co-ordination of these revolutionary activities across the frontiers by international working-class collaboration.

Lenin's policy was rejected by most of the anti-war parties—some, like the I.L.P., because they had not yet developed a revolutionary attitude, or because they were still thinking in terms of the revolutionary change of society through the Capitalist State and regarded the war as a temporary event which, once concluded, would permit of a return to the old courses; others because they regarded the objective conditions as against a successful revolution and as favourable to the conclusion of the war only by the initiative and negotiation of the Capitalist Governments.

Lenin was shortly to prove the soundness of his view by carrying through the social revolution in Russia. The other Parties continued to hesitate.

This brings us to the second great betrayal of the working-class struggle and the Socialist cause arising from the departure of the Movement from its independent class basis. Indeed, there is much to say for the view that the betrayal at the end of the war was even greater than during the war, because at the end of the war the opportunity for the social revolution was present, whilst during the war the opportunity seemed distant in most countries.

To a greater or less degree this opportunity was present throughout Europe, particularly in the countries defeated in the war, but in both victorious and vanquished countries the working-class Parties sacrificed the struggle by temporizing with the Capitalist class and the Capitalist State. In the vanquished countries they surrendered the class struggle to collaborate with the Liberal sections of the

Capitalist class to stabilize the newly-established democratic régimes. In the victorious countries they surrendered the class struggle to collaborate with their Governments in the post-war "reconstruction". Let us take the developments in Britain as an illustration.

In Britain the end of the war saw the coalescence of two powerful potentially revolutionary elements—the industrial workers, conscious of their importance and power in the factories during the war, and the returned soldiers, fed up, reckless, disillusioned, cynical, respectors neither of persons, traditions nor authority. The Government met this dangerous concentration by inviting the leaders of Labour to serve on Commissions on a fifty-fifty basis, an unprecedented recognition of the status of the working class, and by promising to apply the recommendations of such Commissions. The Mines Commission was a case in point. Mr. Lloyd George averted a miners' strike by appointing a Commission in which the advocates of mines nationalization actually had a majority and pledged himself to carry out its findings. The working-class leaders were flattered, the rank-and-file were bewildered by the new recognition accorded them, and were easily misled into believing that in very truth the war had made things different, that a new world was being inaugurated. The Commissions continued to enquire until the revolutionary feeling had subsided and conditions reverted to pre-war normality. Then the Government forgot all about its promises and ignored the recommendations made. Mines nationalization was one of the recommendations which the Government had pledged itself to apply. Mines nationalization is still only a hope.

A further stage of working-class collaboration with the Capitalist class followed—followed whilst the Capitalist class steadily renewed the domination over the workers which the war had so rudely threatened to destroy. The

Capitalist statesmen, economists and employers united to declare that "more production" was the salvation of the nation, and particularly the working class. The way to raise the standard of life, they said, was to produce more, then and then only would there be more to share out, then and then only would the workers be able to get more.

The working-class movement and its leaders rose to this bait as they had risen to the bait of honoured participation in the Government Commissions. One Labour leader after another pronounced for "more production". Posters appeared on all the hoardings with photographs of the best-known national Trade Union officials calling on their members to collaborate with the employers to produce more. By this time the Capitalist class had nothing to fear. The workers had become its slaves again, the workers' leaders had become their task-masters.

In the other victorious countries the leaders of the working-class similarly threw away the opportunity of the post-war period. The failure in Germany and the vanquished countries will be considered in our next chapter.

CHAPTER IV

THE FAILURE OF THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL

WHEN the intensities and excitements of the war and its post-war revolutionary period were over, the parties of the Second International settled down to prepare a theoretical justification for the policy of compromise and class-collaboration which they had adopted. I was a member of the Executive of the Second International from 1924 to 1930, and remember the many discussions on these issues of policy. The Germans, Scandinavians, Poles, Belgians and Dutch accepted openly the policy of coalition with sections of the Capitalist class. The Austrians, Italians, Swiss, Spanish and Americans were critical. The French were divided. Uncompromising opposition was given by the British I.L.P., the Polish I.L.P., and (after it joined the Second International) the Polish Bund. The British Labour Party occupied a curious position. Whilst advocating compromising policies which expressed the policy of class-collaboration, it opposed a formal political coalition with Capitalist parties.

Finally, Friederich Adler, the Secretary of the International, produced a thesis which reflected the views of the majority of the parties. It put forward the view that the Socialist movement must pass through three stages—first a period of political weakness, when it would necessarily be in opposition in Parliaments; then a period of strength without an absolute majority, when it would enter into alliance with the less reactionary Capitalist Parties to form Coalition

Governments ; and finally a period of power, when it had obtained a majority and could rule in its own strength.

How far the Second International had departed from the basis of the class struggle was shown in this document. It assumed that the transition from Capitalism to Socialism could be achieved through the Capitalist State. It accepted the truce in the class struggle which alliances with Capitalist parties involve. The change to Socialism was seen as an orderly growth through the gradual modification of the Capitalist State rather than as a conflict between the possessing and working classes within that State, involving its overthrow and the establishment of a Workers' State.

The new policy was put into operation most clearly in Germany and there it most tragically failed. The German Social Democratic Party was the most powerful working-class organization in the world (except the large Communist Party which had sprung up in Soviet Russia). It had a Trade Union membership of nine millions; it polled thirteen million votes ; it had a majority in the chief State of Prussia ; it ruled over a hundred of the largest cities ; it had a powerful co-operative organization ; its cultural and sport organizations were vast in size and influence ; it had a mighty Press, with over seventy daily newspapers ; it had the largest Party in the Reichstag.

If the German Party had shown a challenging front it could have swept Germany. Instead, it did nothing to differentiate itself from the Capitalist State ; indeed, it identified itself with the Capitalist State in every way. It became the principal defence of the " democratic " Capitalist State.

During a period of permanent crisis, both political and economic, when the masses of the workers were suffering bitterly from semi-starvation and insecurity, when German Capitalism was tottering under the burdens of the Versailles

Treaty and inflation was making money of no account—in this period of political and economic breakdown the Social Democratic Party became the citadel of the status quo. It devoted its whole policy, not to ending Capitalism, but to saving Capitalism and the Capitalist State from collapse. It entered into a series of alliances with Capitalist Parties, and joined a series of Coalition Governments to maintain Capitalist “democracy”. It referred proudly to the fact that “democratic” was in its name; it forgot that social democracy cannot be realized so long as Capitalism continues.

The inevitable happened. The masses of the people—particularly the young people—turned impatiently from this Party which gave no challenging, positive lead, which was content to defend the intolerable present with no promise of a better future. They turned to the Communist and Fascists Parties, which were at least preparing for a change, advocating action, and making some show of resistance to forces, both international and national, which were crushing the German people.

It should never be forgotten that the Nazi movement in its early days gained much of its support by emphasizing its “Socialist” pretensions, by voicing the grievances of those who were suffering most acutely, and by denouncing the financiers and monopolists as responsible.

The policy of the German Social Democratic Party was based on the view that Capitalist “democracy” with all its economic injustice was “a lesser evil” than Fascism, and that therefore Socialists were justified in entering into an alliance with anti-Fascist Capitalist Parties to resist the advance of Fascism.

This view overlooked a number of considerations: first, that Fascism is an inevitable expression of Capitalism in crisis, and that any modification of the struggle against Capitalism itself encourages the growth of Fascism; second,

that the absence of a bold clear-cut policy in the tragic conditions of Germany inevitably disappointed and alienated masses of desperate people ; third, that the negative defence of the status quo gave the initiative to the Fascists, who claimed that, in contrast to the Social Democrats, they stood for hopeful and positive change ; fourth, that the surrender of the class struggle in favour of collaboration with sections of the Capitalist class meant the demoralization and division of the working-class movement, by removing all the fighting spirit from its ranks, and by splitting off its most active sections to become recruits to the Communist Party.

The final and complete condemnation of Social Democratic policy came when the Nazi challenge reached its climax. At that moment its Capitalist " democratic " allies deserted the anti-Fascist front and acquiesced in the dictatorship of Hitler ; and the demoralization of the Working-class Movement had gone so far that the Nazi triumph met with no real resistance. The Social Democratic leaders had compromised away the last elements of the class struggle. They had taught their members so to rely upon the use of the instruments of the Capitalist State—the ballot box, municipal power, the State Parliaments, the Reichstag—that when these instruments were taken out of their hands they were helpless. The working class had not the morale to rely on themselves and their own organizations. There was no general strike. There was not the beginning of armed resistance. Such was the fall of the most powerful working-class Party in the world, It fell because it had turned its back on the class struggle.

It cannot be said that the German Social Democratic Party was not warned. The small minority group in the Second International sounded repeated warnings. In 1928 there was an International Congress at Vienna, at which James Maxton denounced the policy of alliance

with German Capitalism, warned the German Social Democrats of its consequences, and called for a reversion to the policy of the class struggle. Otto Wels was contemptuous of the warning. A year later there was an International Conference at Zurich. Here I was the spokesman of the minority. Fascism was by then too threatening to allow the German Social Democrats to reply in the same tone, but Breitscheid gave a pledge to the delegates that his party would not fail to offer other than Parliamentary resistance if the need arose. No doubt the intention was there ; but when the need did arise the spirit and will were lacking because the methods of the class struggle had been put on one side so long that the temper had been lost and the technique had been forgotten.

It was not only within nations that the class struggle was put on one side. In international policy it was the same. It seems almost incredible to-day to recollect that at the Vienna Congress, at the subsequent Zurich Conference, at every Executive meeting during these fateful years of Fascist growth, the chief item on the agenda and the centre of hope was the Disarmament Conference of the League of Nations. The hours of discussion the Socialist leaders of Europe gave to it ! The elaborate plans for a Pact of Mutual Assistance fathered by Arthur Henderson, Foreign Secretary of the British Labour Government ! The debates we had as to whether Socialists should accept delegations from non-Socialist Governments in order that they could use their influence towards disarmament ! The schemes that were discussed for limiting expenditure on armaments, for limiting the tonnage of battleships, and for prohibiting the use of poison gas. The reams of paper used for circulating memoranda on these devices ! How futile it all seems to-day when the nations are mounting up armaments on an unprecedented scale.

This was not a temporary or accidental diversion in Social Democratic policy. The Social Democratic theory of the transition to Socialism through influencing the Capitalist State led logically to the view that the League—the international political instrument of Capitalism—should be relied upon as the instrument to maintain peace. Forgotten was the Socialist analysis that Capitalism is the cause of war and that so long as Capitalism continues no political instrument can resolve its antagonisms or prevent those antagonisms from becoming clothed in extending armaments. Forgotten was the Socialist analysis that the political structure of the Capitalist State—nowhere more powerfully expressed than in the League, a combination of fifty and more Capitalist States—is the instrument of the dominant possessing class for the operation of its purposes, and that it must be overthrown before the Workers' State and Socialism can be established.

I remember that one proposal received with great favour by the Second International was that the League should have an international armed force—an army, navy and air-force, under its control. As I listened to this I visualized the class struggle of the future—the rising of the workers not only in one land but across the frontiers. On whose side would the international armed force of the Capitalist League be used then?

It was in vain that during these discussions the minority urged that the correct Socialist policy to resist increasing armaments and the war danger was to intensify and co-ordinate independent action by the working class—the strengthening of the class struggle against Capitalism as the cause of war, refusal to vote war credits in Parliaments, the preparation of the Trade Union Movement to meet any war threat by industrial action, the clear indication to the Capitalist Governments that the outbreak of war would

involve a social revolution which would sweep them aside. The furthest concession we could secure in this direction was that if any Government resorted to war without the authority of the League of Nations, working-class resistance would then be justified. In other words, the action of the working class was to be determined by the judgment of the international authority of Capitalism! So far had the Socialist Movement departed from the class struggle basis of Marx.

These tendencies in the Working-class Movement were reflected in the British Movement no less than in other countries. Although the Labour Party declined to accept the tactic of Coalition Governments in partnership with Capitalist Parties, the policy of the minority Governments of 1924 and 1929-31 was in effect the same. I remember the discussion in the Parliamentary party prior to the introduction of the programme of the 1929 Government. The leadership urged that the policy must be to remain in office as long as possible and to do as much as possible within the limitations of minority government. The I.L.P. group pointed out that this would involve introducing not a Socialist policy, but a policy acceptable to the Liberal Capitalist Party, which held the balance of power. John Wheatley, the I.L.P. spokesman, insisted that during a period of trade depression this would mean being driven from compromise to compromise, and that finally the Labour Government would find itself becoming an instrument, not to improve, but actually to worsen working-class conditions, because this is the only method by which Capitalism can deal with a condition of economic crisis. The alternative proposed by the I.L.P. was the introduction of a programme for the immediate improvement of working-class conditions leading up to fundamental Socialist proposals. This would mean Parliamentary defeat before long ;

but it would maintain the class struggle and would enable the Government, when defeated, to go to the country on a fighting Socialist policy, which, even if it did not secure an immediate majority, would give a much better result than would follow years of disastrous compromise, and would hasten the coming of ultimate victory.

When Parliament met, and the King's Speech outlining a programme of moderate reforms was read, the prophecy of John Wheatley was fulfilled to the letter. Mr. Lloyd George, on behalf of the Liberals, promised the Labour Government support—so long as it did not introduce Socialist legislation; if Socialist legislation were introduced, then the Liberals would combine with the Conservatives to defeat it. The prophecy of John Wheatley was fulfilled still more tragically by events. The economic crisis of Capitalism deepened and the Liberal Capitalists—no less than the Conservative Capitalists—demanded economy at the expense of the workers. The Labour Government, as the price of continuing in office, reduced the wages of workers in the public service, introduced the Anomalies Act (under which 300,000 unemployed were refused benefit), and appointed the May Economy Commission, which recommended the Means Test. It was on a Liberal Party motion that the May Economy Commission was appointed.

The humiliating end of the Labour Government—the desertion of Ramsay MacDonald, Philip Snowden, J. H. Thomas, and others, the disastrous defeat of the Party at the subsequent General Election—these were the consequences of the initial mistake of limiting Labour policy within the scope of Capitalism, of allowing the Liberal Party to determine what legislation should be introduced, of sacrificing the workers to the necessities of Capitalism, of adopting a policy which in the last resort was aimed, not at ending Capitalism, but at saving Capitalism in its time

of crisis. In Germany the Social Democrats entered a Coalition Government with the Liberal Capitalists. In Britain the Labour Party refrained from inviting the Liberal Capitalists to enter their Government, but they conditioned the programme of the Government according to the promise of Liberal support and finally accepted Liberal proposals even when they meant a worsening of working-class conditions. In practice and effect the policy in both countries was the same.

And in both countries the Parties of the working class sacrificed the workers to maintain Capitalism, accepted reductions in the standard of the life of the workers to enable Capitalism to get over its crisis, rallied to the Capitalist State in its time of need in order to restrain the forces which might have moved towards social revolution. In both countries the Parties not only departed from the class struggle—they actually permitted themselves to become instruments of the Capitalist class in the class struggle !

It is not necessary here to describe how on the industrial side of the British Labour Movement the same fatal policy was pursued—how in the 1926 strike the charge that they were taking un-Constitutional action and the fear that a continuation of the struggle might lead to a revolutionary situation brought the leaders to heel ; how the Trades Union Congress General Council entered into the Mond-Turner negotiations for a policy of collaboration between the employing class and the employed ; how even when industrial recovery began to return in 1936 the Trade Union movement had become so accustomed to the policy of collaboration with the employing class that no great national drive could be made for improved conditions, and the struggle was limited almost entirely to unofficial strikes.

The cause of the failure of the Working-class Movement

attached to the Second International and its associated Trade Union organizations is clear—it has been due to policies which have surrendered the class struggle against Capitalism and the Capitalist State. To the degree to which the class struggle has been surrendered the workers have been defeated. The whole history of the Working-class Movement repeats and emphasizes this experience.

But at the end of the war the Second International was not left with the sole leadership of the working class. A new hope was born in Soviet Russia. An alternative working-class instrument was created in the Communist International and in the Communist Parties. How did this new instrument justify that new hope?

CHAPTER V

THE FAILURE OF THE THIRD INTERNATIONAL

WE HAVE seen how the Third (or Communist) International began as a revolt against the policy of class collaboration practised by the parties of the Second International during the war. Lenin called the workers back to Marx. The working-class movement must refuse to identify itself with the Capitalist class or the Capitalist State, either in peace or war, he said. It must rely on itself and on its own organizations to carry on the class struggle until the possessing class and its State are overthrown.

The Communist International began on these lines. With the example of the Soviet Revolution in Russia it started to organize the World Revolution. In every country the Communist Parties called to the workers to break with the policy of the Social Democrats and Labourists, and to return to the class struggle. To all the Continents this appeal went, and, with the assistance of the powerful Communist Party of Russia, groups of workers of every race and colour—Indians, Chinese, Negroes as well as Europeans and Americans—commenced to organize a great world-wide campaign for the social revolution which should sweep away Capitalism and its accompanying evil of Imperialism.

The new Movement stood for two things which in practice are difficult to combine—the class struggle on immediate issues, and its direction towards revolution. They are difficult to combine because the class struggle on immediate issues involves action through the working

class and its organizations ; and when these organizations are not prepared to follow a revolutionary policy, or even to allow groups within them to advocate such a policy, the problem of maintaining solidarity with the mass of the workers and at the same time of directing them towards social revolution, is not easy to solve. This is the central problem of revolutionary tactics, and is at the heart of many of the issues which face us to-day.

The Communist International made its first mistakes in relation to this problem. In Russia a strong Trade Union movement was built up under Communist inspiration and direction, and it was natural that the International should attempt to extend its " Red " Trades Unions to other countries, particularly since in most Continental countries the different political parties which appealed to the working class had their distinctive Trades Unions. The largest Trades Unions were attached to the Social Democratic Parties, but there were also Catholic Unions and Liberal Democratic Unions, and the Anarchists had their Syndicalist Unions. To this industrial division of the workers the Communists added their " Red " Unions.

This policy had a disastrous effect on the very purpose which the Communists set out to serve—the furtherance of the class struggle. The first instrument of the class struggle must be the Trades Unions because the place of work—the factory, pit, office, or railway yard—is the daily scene of the class struggle. Anything which weakens the industrial organization of the working class, as splits in the Trade Union Movement are bound to do, must weaken the ability of the workers to resist attacks by the employing class or to secure concessions from it. In Britain the Communists did not succeed in establishing Red Trade Unions of any significance, but in some of the Continental countries, particularly Germany, the division created in the industrial

Movement was serious. This weakening of German Trades Unionism must be counted as one of the factors which contributed to the growth and ultimate success of Fascism in Germany.

The second mistake of the Communists was also related to this difficulty of combining class struggle advocacy with class struggle action. Class struggle advocacy involves denunciation of policies of class collaboration ; it therefore means strong criticism of the policy of the Social Democratic leadership. But class struggle action means united action by the working class through the instruments of the working class against Capitalism ; it therefore means co-operation whenever possible with the mass Social Democratic organizations. It certainly means the adoption of an attitude of mind towards these organizations and the application of a tactic which will progressively win the support of their members.

The Communists adopted an attitude of mind and tactic which had the opposite effect. The description given in the last chapter of the compromising policy of the leadership, particularly in Germany, shows that the Communists had reason to criticize ; but their criticism went to the point of regarding the Social Democratic Party as a worse enemy than the Capitalist Parties. The Social Democratic leaders were denounced as " Social-Fascists " to be fought no less aggressively than the Fascists themselves. This extravagance had inevitably the opposite effect to that intended ; it rallied the disgusted Social Democratic membership behind the leaders, and so embittered them that all hope of united class action against the Capitalist class and Fascism was destroyed. The theory of " Social-Fascism " was obviously false. The Social Democrats were sincere in their opposition to Fascism, however disastrously wrong their policy was. To define them as a wing of Fascism helped

only the genuine Fascists, who gained in strength from the civil war in the working-class ranks.

Ironically enough, the theory of "Social-Fascism" led the Communists to complete the circle of extremism themselves, so that they were actually driven to the point of common action with the Fascists against the Social Democrats. When the Nazis demanded a referendum in Prussia to compel the resignation of the Social Democratic Government, the Communists instructed their members and followers to vote with the Nazis. The Communists are fond of describing the actions of sections of the working class with which they disagree as criminal. I know no greater crime in working-class tactics than the Communist tactic in this Prussian referendum. Its effect in deepening the division in the working-class movement was of critical importance in the advance of Fascism in Germany.

When later the Communists appealed to the Social Democrats for unity against Fascism it was too late. The damage had been done. Division had so demoralized the German working class that when the testing time came it was incapable of action. The Communists called for a general strike against Hitler's seizure of dictatorship. Not a single worker responded. The Communists no less than the Social Democrats had lost all moral authority over the German workers. In both cases the failure was due to the betrayal of the class struggle—the Social Democrats had collaborated with the Capitalist class, the Communists had destroyed the possibility of collaboration between sections of the working class. Their policies represented the opposites in a common betrayal.

The triumph of Hitler brought about a complete turn in International Communist policy. Even before the Fascists' success in Germany there had been indications

that the Russian Communist leaders, who so largely controlled the Communist International, had begun to modify the policy of stimulating world revolution in favour of concentration on the task of consolidating the Russian revolution. This change was emphasized by the immediate attitude adopted towards the new German régime. When Mussolini established his dictatorship in Italy, the Communist International called on the working class to organize a boycott of goods to Italy, to refuse to make, handle or transport any articles destined for Italy. When Hitler established his dictatorship, Soviet Russia immediately renewed its trade agreement with Germany. At the moment when Hitler was rounding up the German Communists, imprisoning them, herding them in concentration camps, inflicting indescribable tortures on them, executing them, the representatives of Soviet Russia were putting their pens to an extended agreement for mutual trade between the two countries. It must remain a matter for speculation how far the failure of the working-class movement of the world to act at this moment by an organized refusal of trade with Germany was a decisive factor in enabling Fascism to establish its hold. The Hitler régime was weak in those first days; its economic foundations were trembling. Concerted action by the working class of other countries, supported by Soviet Russia, might have brought Hitler to the ground before his feet were firmly placed on the bodies of the German working class.

But once Fascism became a power in Germany, as soon as it became clear that Hitler regarded the Communist régime in Russia as his main enemy, the attitude of the Soviet leaders and of the Communist International became one of concentration against Germany at all costs. Everything was sacrificed to the object of defending Russia against the German menace—the very basis of the Communist

International, its *raison d'être*, the need to organize the working class to carry on the class struggle through its own instruments and in its own strength, the refusal of collaboration with the Capitalist class, the Capitalist State, Capitalist Governments and the Capitalist League of Nations—all these were thrown overboard. The Communist International adopted the very policy which it had been formed to reject. It became the defender of collaboration with Capitalist Parties, with Capitalist Governments, and with the Capitalist League. History has not shown a more complete *volte face*.

The explanation for this change was simple; what was not so simple to understand was the manner in which the *volte face* was accepted by the Communist Parties throughout the world. The explanation was that Hitler Germany threatened Soviet Russia with war, threatened war in alliance with Japan in the Far East. After the defeat and suppression of the powerful German Socialist organization the working-class movement could not be relied on to prevent this war (so ran the Communist argument) or to come to Russia's assistance should the war occur. Therefore Soviet Russia must seek new allies, and those allies could be found among the Capitalist States opposed to the Imperialist designs of Germany—chiefly France, Britain and Czecho-Slovakia. Therefore Soviet Russia must enter the Capitalist League of Nations so that she could count on the support of the League Powers in the event of attack by Germany and Japan. This was made more easy by the fact that both Japan and Germany had withdrawn from the League.

To justify this departure in policy a new theory was elaborated. Capitalist States were divided into two categories—the “war-making dictatorship States” and the “peace-loving democratic States”. Germany and Japan and

Italy (less certainly—there was a period when the hope was cherished that she could be wooed away from Germany)—these were the “war-making dictatorship States”. The British Empire, France, Czecho-Slovakia, the United States of America and their satellites among the smaller nations were the “peace-loving democratic States”. Under the new theory, working-class collaboration with the “peace-loving democratic States” was permissible; the principle of the class struggle was only to be applied in international policy to the “war-making dictatorship States”. The class struggle was re-defined in international affairs. It was no longer to be conducted against Capitalism, but only against Capitalism when it had developed to the stage of Fascism.

The psychology for this revolution in the policy of the Communist International was carefully prepared. The anger of the world working class was aroused almost exclusively against Germany. This was done easily: the tyrannies and barbarities of Hitler were such that it was not a difficult task to create everywhere an intensity of enmity against German Fascism which made other enmities fade away in comparison. The Communist Press everywhere concentrated upon the enormities of Hitler—the burning of the Reichstag, the tortures, the concentration camps, the mass trials, the executions, the suppression of the working-class organizations, the burning of Socialist, Pacifist and even Liberal books. The Social Democratic and Labourist Press was taking the same line for its own reasons; as we have seen in the last chapter the fight for Capitalist political democracy was more important to it than the fight against Capitalism. With this mass publicity in the Social Democratic and Communist Press, all depicting Hitler and Fascist Germany as the greatest menace to peace, democracy and freedom, the ground was well prepared for the change of

policy which threw over everything to concentrate against the danger from Germany.

The next stage was to isolate and spotlight the Fascist danger in other countries. The international policy of collaborating with the Capitalist "democratic" Governments in order to win them as allies for Soviet Russia against Germany was followed by national policies of seeking alliances with the democratic Capitalist Parties within each country in order to build up broad Popular Fronts against Fascism and to influence the various Governments to join the Soviet bloc against Germany. Thus the Communist International, which had denounced the German Social Democrats as "Social-Fascists" for allying themselves with Liberal Capitalist Parties against Hitler, came to adopt precisely the same tactic on a world-wide scale: in every country it urged its parties to pursue a policy of unity, not only with other sections of the working class, but with the democratic Liberal Parties and even with the democratic elements in the Conservative Parties.

Let us admit that the reality of the German danger to Soviet Russia and to peace presented a strong case for throwing over the class struggle principle of no collaboration with Capitalist Governments and the Capitalist class. It cannot be dismissed angrily as a betrayal. It must be examined not only in the light of Socialist theory, but objectively by its results.

Were Marx and Engels wrong? They foresaw the coming of Capitalist dictatorship, of the Iron Heel, of Fascism. But they never suggested that it would necessitate a truce in the class struggle in order to enter into alliances with Capitalist elements opposed to dictatorship; indeed, they suggested that it would demand the intensification of the class struggle. Were they mistaken? Is the theory of the class struggle itself faulty? Do the facts of the Fascist

danger and the tactic necessary to meet it compel us to revise our basic views? When both the major sections of the working-class movement, the Social Democrats and Communists alike, decide that collaboration with Capitalist Governments and Capitalist Parties, identification with the Capitalist State and the Capitalist League, are necessary in order to overcome Fascism, it is time for us to pause and reconsider fundamentals.

Before we answer this question let us look at some of the consequences of the changed policy of the Communist International. We now have the evidence of the events of three years. They provide some test.

Even on the class struggle basis there was a case for Soviet Russia entering the League of Nations. Despite the Marxist analysis of the Capitalist State, Socialists enter Parliaments; on the class struggle basis there is no reason why they should not do so as long as they regard Parliaments as enemy territory in which they can expose the nature of Capitalism, force concessions from the Capitalist class and eventually, when a majority is won, introduce fundamental Socialist changes which will create a revolutionary situation with the advantage of at least partial State control on their side. If Parliaments can be used as national instruments of the class struggle in this manner, so can the League be used as an international instrument of the class struggle—with this one difference: Membership of the League by a Socialist Government involves the acceptance of a Covenant which requires pledges to support Capitalist Governments in time of war if technical aggression has been committed against them. But the Socialist sees the cause of modern war not in a particular issue which may be the subject of arbitration, but in the system of Capitalism, which engenders deep-rooted antagonisms of which a particular issue, thrown up at any given moment, is only a superficial

symbol. When war arises from such an incident, the correct policy of a Socialist Government is not to side with one group of Capitalist nations against another group of Capitalist nations, but to encourage the working class of other countries to carry through social revolution against their Governments, and at the right moment to go to their assistance when they do so. The Covenant of the League is consequently a dangerous document for any Socialist Government to accept.

Soviet Russia, however, accepted the Covenant with its eyes open and willingly, because Germany and Japan were not members of the League, and it wanted the support of the League nations in the war which these two Powers threatened to wage upon it. Having decided to rely upon other Capitalist Governments rather than the International Working-class Movement, this was a logical position.

But this desire for the support of the Capitalist nations within the League inevitably meant that Soviet Russia could not use the League on the class struggle basis as "enemy territory". Soviet Russia wanted the co-operation of the Capitalist States. It could not therefore use the League as an international platform to denounce Capitalism or the Capitalist States. It particularly desired the co-operation of the two leading Imperialist Powers—France and Britain. It could not therefore denounce the leading evil of Capitalism in the international field—the evil of Imperialism. It certainly could not use the League Assembly to appeal either to the working class of other countries to revolt against their Capitalist States or to the subject peoples of Empires to revolt against their Imperialist masters. By the manner in which she entered the League Soviet Russia definitely put aside the class struggle

theory of the political structure of Capitalism. She identified herself wholeheartedly with the League.

This became evident from Litvinoff's first speech, which, indeed, only reflected what had previously been written in *Pravda* and *Izvestia*, the organs of the Soviet Government. After dividing the world into war-threatening and peace-loving nations, Litvinoff proceeded to pay a eulogistic tribute to the "sincere international idealism" of the statesmen of the latter, bowing especially to the representatives of France and Britain as he did so. The representative of France was M. Laval. The representative of Britain was Sir John Simon. Sincere international idealism! These were the statesmen who had already allowed Japan to march roughshod over Manchuria and who afterwards allowed Mussolini to march roughshod over Abyssinia. These were statesmen who in their own countries were the bitterest enemies of the working class. And so far from using the League as a platform to expose them, Litvinoff paid exultant tribute to them! Here was early indication that Soviet Russia intended to use the League as an instrument not to "debunk" the Capitalist State, but to buttress it in order to win its confidence.

A second incident rapidly put beyond doubt the rôle which Soviet Russia was to play in the League. When the League plebiscite in the Saar resulted in a majority being given for Germany, Litvinoff congratulated the Hitler Government on "the return of her sons to its bosom". No Socialist pursuing the policy of the class struggle could have used a phrase of this kind. The plebiscite took place under conditions of vicious intimidations; its result meant that thousands of courageous Socialists and Communists would either have to tear up their homes and cross the frontier or face internment in concentration camps and worse. And Litvinoff, the representative of the Workers'

State of Soviet Russia, congratulated Germany on "the return of her sons to her bosom"! As this chapter is being written two years after Germany's affectionate embrace to her children returned from exile, the Press reports how hundreds of Saar miners have been driven across the frontier from the maternal bosom which received them.

Russia's policy, not so much in entering the League as in identifying herself with it—in effect, entering into an International Coalition with Capitalist and Imperialist Governments—had an immediate reaction upon the tactics and temper of the working-class movement in all countries. It should be remembered that the official Social Democratic and Labour Parties were already urging that the working class should build its Peace policy on Geneva. Up to the identification of Russia with the League, the "Left" within the working class, including the Communists, had opposed this line, denouncing the League as a Capitalist-Imperialist institution and urging that the workers should resist war through their own organizations. When Soviet Russia also began to build its Peace policy on Geneva, confusion was thrown into the ranks of the "Left" and the Communists found themselves catapulted into the same camp as the Right Wing. The Left had always tended to base its case on Soviet Russia. Now a main prop in the structure of its argument had collapsed.

In every country there was a swing away from the class struggle basis of war resistance. Instead of the workers relying on themselves and their organizations to prevent war, they were urged to look to the League for salvation. In Britain the change in attitude was very sharp. At the Labour Party Conference in 1932, prior to the entry of Soviet Russia into the League of Nations, the Socialist League secured a majority for the policy of the general

strike against war: the Labour Party Executive was instructed to get into immediate contact with the General Council of the Trade Union Congress to plan concerted industrial resistance if war threatened. At the next Labour Party Conference, following Russia's entrance into the League, the policy of the General Strike was put on the shelf, and, instead, the Labour Party decided to base its whole Peace programme on the League. In advocating this, Mr. Arthur Henderson used Russia's example as his main argument. The definite turning away of the working-class movement from the policy of class resistance to war and the substitution in its place of reliance upon pacts between Capitalist Governments and action by the Capitalist League—this was due more to Soviet Russia's changed policy than to any other cause.

We are testing the new policy of the Communist International by its results in practice. This was the first result.

The second result was to impede the class struggle in the "democratic" Capitalist countries. It was obviously impossible for Soviet Russia and the Communist International to boost the "peace-loving" character of the British and French Governments (both undeniably reactionary Capitalist-Imperialist Governments at the time of the changed policy) without making more difficult the task of the working-class movement to expose and oppose the nature of these Governments in their own countries. The clearest evidence of this impossible contradiction occurred during the visit of Mr. Eden to Soviet Russia. In speeches and official statements Britain's foreign policy, though the same as it has ever been, directed supremely towards the maintenance of British Imperialism, was extolled as a great instrument towards the guaranteeing of world peace. We were assured that there was complete

accord between the foreign policies of Britain and Soviet Russia.

When Moscow, the headquarters of the Communist International, was saying this, how was it possible for the British Communist Party to denounce with any effectiveness the foreign policy of the National Government as a menace to peace? Bravely the British Communists attempted the contradiction; but Stalin undid every article by Strachey. The effect of Eden's triumphant visit to Moscow was to deepen the conviction, already spread by the British Capitalist Press, both Conservative and Liberal, that in Anthony Eden Britain had found a representative at the Foreign Office who could be relied on to devote himself to the cause of peace. The psychology was prepared which enabled the National Government to come out at the General Election of 1935 as above all things a Peace Government.

The effect of Russia's changed policy in France was still more startling. The historical policy of the Communists in France, as in other countries, was to denounce and vote against the armed forces of the Government. No vote should be given for the military preparations of a Capitalist Government: they would be used in international war for Capitalist purposes, they might be used (as French history had proved) against the working class in civil disputes. This was the historical Communist policy; but Stalin solemnly assured the reactionary Capitalist, Imperialist Government of France that its armed forces were justified! Russia was negotiating a political and military pact with the Capitalist Government of France. Therefore the class struggle policy against armaments held by a Capitalist Government must be reversed; the armaments were justified. The French Communist Party might vote against them. But with what conviction? What

conviction would their action in so doing carry to the French workers ?

Here is the second result of our test of the Communist International's changed policy in practice. It involved a modification of the clear-cut class struggle against the foreign policy of Capitalist Governments and against their war preparations.

Another inevitable stage followed. Britain and France, most assiduously wooed by Russia among the "democratic" Capitalist States, were the two foremost Imperialist Powers. They had vast territories where "coloured" peoples were cruelly exploited, existing in a condition of permanent semi-starvation, denied political rights, denied the right to organize (except in the most subdued way) on a working-class or peasant basis. During its period of World Revolution policy, the Communist International had been active in stimulating revolt amongst them, and in co-operating with those who were courageously demanding the right of self-government and social emancipation. The Communist International took the initiative in calling together at Brussels an inspiring conference aimed at co-ordinating the revolutionary struggle of the workers of Europe with the struggle for freedom of the subject nations. Chinese, Indians, Negroes, Egyptians, Arabs—representatives of every race and colour among the exploited peoples—assembled together with representatives of the Russian, British, French and European and American working class to swear fidelity in the common struggle against all Imperialisms, and not least against the Imperialisms of Britain and France. The League against Imperialism was formed to cement this solidarity.

But when the first object of Soviet Russia's foreign policy became the winning of Imperialist Britain and Imperialist France as its allies, how could this aggressive

stimulation of revolt within their Empires be maintained? How feast Mr. Eden in Moscow and encourage revolt against Mr. Eden's Government in India? Inevitably the anti-Imperialist struggle in the British and French Empires was put in the background. The League against Imperialism was permitted to continue to exist on paper, but it was starved of funds, a forgotten, unrecognized child. The subject peoples who had been led to look with hope to Moscow came to despair of Russia as they had already learned to despair of proffered help from other countries. Their leaders turned away disgusted and disillusioned.

The changed policy of the Communist International thus stands condemned on the third test applied—the test of its effect upon the struggle against Imperialism among the “coloured” peoples. Everyone in touch with those peoples knows how disastrous the result has been.

But the major and most disastrous effect of the changed Communist policy has been this: because its supreme purpose has been to win Capitalist Governmental allies for Soviet Russia, the Communist International, which began as the embodiment of World Revolution, has developed as a deliberate impediment to revolution.

The Governmental ally which Soviet Russia needs most is Capitalist and Imperialist Britain. British policy is directed towards the maintenance of her political and economic Empire—her political Empire of territories over which the British flag flies and her economic Empire of the territories where the capital of the British possessing class is invested. The economic Empire of Britain is almost world-wide. A revolution in almost any country in the world would menace either the political or the economic interests of British Capitalism. It would be a danger therefore to the maintenance of the status quo and of peace. It would

arouse the antagonism of the British Government to all who had in any way been concerned in bringing it about. Consequently Soviet Russia, if it is to gain Britain as an ally against Germany, must keep herself free from any suggestion of encouraging revolutions in other countries; indeed, if Russia is involved in any way—as she is, for example, in Spain—she must exert her influence *against* revolution. The limit of her interest must be to resist any extension of the influence and power of Germany and, so long as Italy is associated with Germany, of Italy; but the resistance to Germany's allies in Spain must not go beyond the point of assisting a victory for Capitalist democracy against Fascism—it must oppose any tendencies which threaten to carry forward the fight against Fascism to the point of social revolution.

We shall examine Communist policy in Spain in detail in other chapters; here we must be content with stating this general principle behind the policy—a principle which is inevitable when once the starting-point is conceded of making the paramount objective the gaining of Capitalist allies against Germany.

To ensure the goodwill of Capitalist Britain is Soviet Russia's first concern in international policy—she already has her political and military pacts with France and Czecho-Slovakia, and Britain is now the vital link to complete the chain round Germany. But the Soviet Government, and thus the Communist International, is also concerned to win the goodwill of all the “democratic” Capitalist countries, the European countries within the League of Nations, and the United States of America. Therefore political democracy within Capitalism is substituted for Socialism as its determining aim.

This becomes the Communist aim not only in international affairs. It is its aim within nations. The policy

of an alliance between Soviet Russia and the "democratic" Capitalist Governments against Fascist Germany is supplemented by the object of establishing an alliance between the working-class organizations and the "democratic" elements of Capitalism within the different countries. Such alliances for "democracy" against Fascism can be counted on to support the Soviet aim of mobilizing the fullest available forces against Germany and in favour of pacts with Russia. A working class front on the basis of class is to be replaced by a Popular Front to include the Liberal and Conservative "democrats". The class struggle against Capitalism is to retire in favour of an all-class coalition for "democracy."

This brings us to the central theme of this book. The operation of the Popular Front in different countries must be examined.

But, as a preliminary to that examination, we can say that in its international aspects the changed policy of the Communist International has clearly involved the repudiation of the Marxist view of the class struggle as the dynamic towards Socialism and of the Marxist view of the Capitalist State as an enemy institution of the possessing class with which the working class must not identify itself. It has undermined the revolutionary struggle against War, Imperialism, and Capitalism.

The Communist International no less than the Social Democratic International is responsible for the present chloroformed condition of the Socialist Movement.

CHAPTER VI

THE POPULAR FRONT IN SPAIN

THE examples of Spain and France are cited most frequently in defence of the policy of the Popular Front. Had it not been for the alliance between the working class and the Liberal Capitalist Parties, the argument runs, the Spanish people would never have won their electoral victory over Fascism, and would never have shown the degree of unity necessary to resist General Franco. Had it not been for the Popular Front the Fascists would have been victorious in France and the workers would not have gained the forty-hour working week and the other ameliorations which followed the return of the Blum Socialist-Liberal Government.

Do the experiences of Spain and France really mean that the guiding principles of Karl Marx are wrong in the present situation, that the menace of Fascism requires a departure from the basis of the class struggle and identification with the Capitalist State? Let us look at Spain and France.

It is not necessary here to go back far into the history of Spain, but it is worth recalling that after the flight of King Alfonso in 1931 there was an example of the Popular Front in practice which was not encouraging. A Republican Government was formed. The Socialists entered it in defence of "Republican democracy". It failed disastrously because of the contradictory elements which composed it. It did nothing to make the workers and peasants feel in the actual experience of their daily lives that any

important change had taken place in society, whilst it permitted the forces of Feudalism and the Church to recover. It was followed—as all through history compromising and indecisive administrations have been followed unless a revolutionary leadership has won the support of the masses—by Reaction. A Right Government, combining to defend Capitalism, Feudalism and the Church, came into office. Repression of the workers began.

In 1934 there was the rising initiated by the miners in the Asturias. It was suppressed by bloody force. Thirty thousand workers and their leaders were imprisoned. Black reaction and tyranny were supreme.

One of the curses of Spain was the disunity of the working-class movement. It was divided into two main sections: the Social Democrats (Socialist Party) with their Trade Union organization, the U.G.T., and the Anarchists with their Trade Union organization, the C.N.T. The Communist Party at that time was very weak. There was another small Party, influential in Catalonia, the Workers' Party of Marxist Unity (the P.O.U.M.). It may be described as a Leninist Communist Party; it based its policy on the principles of Marx, and applied them as Lenin had done in Soviet Russia and as the Communist International had done in its early years.¹

The Anarchists were, of course, anti-Marxists. They represented the school of Bakunin, who broke the First International in conflict with Marx, and whose antagonism to the Capitalist State went to the point of opposing any participation in elections or use of Parliaments. The Anarchists objected to all centralized authority or discipline imposed from above. They looked for the emancipation of the workers by strike action and the assumption of control by

¹ Readers should note these organizations and their initials. They will occur often in this story.

the workers in each factory. They were as strongly opposed to the "dictatorship of the proletariat"—that is, centralized government through working-class organizations maintaining power by force during the transition from Capitalism to Socialism—as to the dictatorship of the possessing class through the Capitalist State and Fascism.

Under the pressure of the Reaction an unprecedented degree of unity was secured among the Spanish workers. The Social Democrats, Anarchists and P.O.U.M. joined in forming Workers' Alliances, which the P.O.U.M. (their initiators and most enthusiastic advocates) endeavoured to prepare to serve as Soviets. At first the Communists, under the influence of their previous isolationist policy, opposed the Workers' Alliances and declined to join them; but subsequently, under the influence of Moscow's new line, they reversed this policy and participated in them.

The movement for unity against Reaction then went a stage further. As the General Election of 1936 approached and the Fascist nature of the Reaction in Spain became more evident, there was a drawing together of the Social Democrats and the Liberals. This move was welcomed by the Communists because it coincided with their conception of the Popular Front. It was not encouraged by the Syndicalists, who were contemptuous of Parliamentary action, or by the P.O.U.M., who did not want an alliance with the Liberal Capitalists and who concentrated upon strengthening the potentially Sovietic Workers' Alliances.

The feeling against the reactionary Government and the Fascist forces in the background was so strong, however, that the idea of a Left alliance of the working class and Liberal parties swept all before it. An agreed programme was drawn up, giving prominence to the two demands most popular among the masses—the liberation of the 30,000 working-class prisoners of 1934 and the freeing of the land

for the peasants. These demands were supplemented by a series of social reforms and by a foreign policy programme based on the League of Nations and the Collective System of Peace ; the participation of the Liberal Capitalists necessarily limited the programme to reforms within Capitalism. The Popular Front won the election by a narrow but adequate majority.

As soon as the election victory was known the workers and peasants took steps to realize their immediate demands. The workers stormed the prisons and released their comrades. In many parts of Spain the peasants seized the land. After the workers and peasants had done this in their own strength and by direct action, the Government issued decrees legalizing the liberation of the prisoners and the transference of the land. It is important to note that the two reforms which the workers and peasants most desired were secured by their own initiative in this way.

It would be foolish however for critics of the Popular Front to deny the effect of the election victory in stimulating the workers and peasants to action. The longing for the release of the prisoners was so great, the hunger of the peasants for land so acute, that the Popular Front secured the support of all sections of the working class. To other items in the programme little attention was paid ; these, and the determination to defeat the reactionaries, were the inspiring motives. Despite their anti-Parliamentary principles, the Anarchists voted for the Popular Front candidates. Despite its Marxism, P.O.U.M. entered the Popular Front for the election, though making reservations about the sections of the programme with which it disagreed and not committing itself to future support.

The mass backing which a Popular Front secures under conditions such as existed in Spain must be recognized. The reality of the Spanish experience—reinforced later,

as we shall see, in France—is that the Popular Front electoral alliance recreated working-class hope, confidence and militancy. When such feeling stirs the working class into action it is absurd for Revolutionary Socialists to ignore it because of a theoretical objection to the Popular Front. It is a first revolutionary duty to be scrupulous in facing realities. Our duty is to analyze the objective conditions and to draw the correct revolutionary lesson.

It is not enough to retort that the fact of working-class unity, apart from the alliance with the Liberals, was in itself responsible for the enthusiasm and action of the workers and peasants. The new confidence of spirit and practice came also from the consciousness of a strength not before realized, the formidable and wide character of the alliance against the reactionaries which the Popular Front represented. It should not be forgotten that the Capitalist Liberals formed numerically the largest unit of the alliance.

Nor is it enough to place all the emphasis on the fact that it was the action of the workers and peasants prior to the formal decrees of the Government which achieved the demands dominant in their minds. The opportunity favourable to such action would not have come without the Popular Front victory ; such action would not have been subsequently legalized (and therefore allowed to operate without suppression by the State forces) had there been no Popular Front Government.

These considerations lead one to the view that an agreement with non-working-class sections is not necessarily anti-revolutionary in its effect—if it is for specific purposes, of limited duration, and without compromising commitments. The principle of the class struggle is repudiated only if such an agreement requires that the workers shall moderate their class demands or refrain from

class action. Any agreement with a section of the Capitalist class which compels the workers to forgo their struggle against the Capitalist class as a whole is a denial of Marxism ; but this does not mean that in a particular situation an agreement for an immediate objective should be rejected if the working-class organizations retain freedom to carry on their general struggle.

If this principle be applied to an election situation we can see that there are circumstances where an agreement strictly limited in scope is justified. This is particularly the case in countries like Spain, where systems of the second ballot or proportional representation are in operation. The working-class parties want to defeat the most reactionary sections of the Capitalist Parties, including the Fascists. So do the Liberal Capitalist Parties. It is therefore in the interests of both that in the final resort their followers should vote for a candidate belonging either to the working-class parties or to the Liberal Capitalist Parties rather than to the reactionary Capitalist and Fascist Parties. The working-class parties want to secure the largest obtainable strength. So do the Liberal Capitalist parties. It is therefore in the interests of both that their votes should be pooled in the final ballot. An agreement on these lines does not demand sacrifices of principle or policy on either side. It is sheer selfish political commonsense for both.

Let us apply this to the situation in Spain. The working-class Parties—Socialist, P.O.U.M., Communist—wish to nominate candidates. They could form a Workers' United Front on a programme expressing the class struggle and embodying the fundamentals of Socialism. Behind such a programme they could decide on a joint panel of candidates and appeal to their followers to vote for them. This would arouse a preliminary enthusiasm on the basis of class unity,

and would secure the return of the maximum number of working-class candidates on the first count or ballot.

But the combination of forces against the reactionaries and Fascists need not end there. An agreement could be reached between the Workers' United Front and the Liberal Capitalist Parties that the second votes should be given to the candidates of one or the other. This would mean in practice that where a working-class candidate was at the bottom of the poll on the first vote, all the support given to him would be transferred in the decisive vote to the Liberal candidate, and vice versa. Thus the maximum strength would be exerted against the reactionaries.

This tactic would allow the working-class parties to stand on their own class programme, but would permit at the same time a joint declaration with the Liberal parties on the issues about which they were in agreement. In Spain, for example, it would have permitted a joint manifesto asking for a united second vote to defeat the reactionaries and Fascists, to release the prisoners, and to provide land for the peasants. This would have combined the retention of working-class freedom of action with the concentration of all forces against the Fascists.

It may be argued that such a tactic would not arouse the same enthusiasm as a complete Popular Front welding closely together forces which do not ordinarily co-operate. But there are strong arguments on the other side. A Workers' United Front, expressing without compromise the demands which appeal most to the workers and peasants, would arouse among them more enthusiasm than the moderate programme of the Popular Front, and it need not modify their support of an agreement with the Liberals on the second vote. The Liberals might become nervous about supporting working-class candidates who stood on a fighting-class programme; but they, too, would be

influenced by the necessity to defeat the reactionaries and Fascists, and would recognize that the agreement was desirable to secure the return of the largest possible Liberal Party.

From a Socialist point of view, this tactic would have the advantage of combining class solidarity behind an uncompromised programme with the defeat of the reactionaries and the attainment, in the case of Spain, of the opportunity to liberate the prisoners and to secure the land for the peasants. Above all, it would not tie the working class hand and foot to a non-Socialist Government following the election. It was here that the disaster lay in Spain. It was this which meant putting the class struggle in storage.

The Liberal Party was returned as the largest Party. It formed a Government with the support of the Socialist and Communist Parties committed to carry through the very moderate series of reforms included in the Popular Front programme. These reforms were necessarily and avowedly within the Capitalist system, and the Socialist leader, Largo Caballero, immediately declared that his party recognized this limitation, would not demand more, and would show disciplined loyalty to the Government on this basis. This was a repetition of the situation, though with the Parties reversed, when the Labour Party in Britain took office as a minority in 1929, and when Mr. Lloyd George promised the support of the Liberal Party so long as no Socialist legislation was introduced.

As already indicated, the workers did not wait for the Government. They liberated the prisoners by direct action. In many parts of the country the peasants seized the land by direct action. The Government proceeded to legalize their action, though in the case of the peasants the legislation was on a basis of concessions to the land-owners which the peasants themselves would not have worried about.

So far, not so bad ; it was the subsequent course of the Government which was so disastrous. The working class was fettered ; it had promised under the Popular Front agreement to support the Government, and could not take independent class action. Meanwhile the typically Liberal weakness of the Government encouraged the Fascists to prepare to avenge their electoral defeat by organizing civil war.

The significance of what the Fascists were doing soon became evident. Joaquin Maurin, the leader of the P.O.U.M. (the Party freed itself from the Popular Front after the election), drew attention to the danger by speeches in the Cortes, the Spanish Parliament. He insisted that Fascism could not be separated from Capitalism, that the only way to overcome the Fascist danger was to take action against the Fascist conspirators and to proceed with a bold programme of socialization and to give the workers control of land and industry. The Popular Front programme of reforms within Capitalism would not remove the basis of Fascism and would give the Fascists time to reorganize their forces for the defence of the power and privileges of the possessing class. Maurin's warning was not heeded ; the working-class organizations were committed to postpone their fight against Capitalism ; and the Fascists proceeded behind this truce to organize on the basis not only of defence but of aggression.

The weakness of the Liberal Government gave them plenty of opportunity. The Spanish officer class in the army was rotten with Fascism. The army had one officer to every six men, and the officers were drawn from the reactionary classes. The civil service and particularly the diplomatic service were rotten with Fascism. The higher posts were the monopoly of the reactionary classes. The Government did something to remove the avowed Fascist in the police force—these were close to the people and known

to them. But in the more secluded spheres of the army, the civil service and the diplomatic corps, the Fascist sympathizers were left practically untouched.

They soon began to plot and conspire. Army officers, including General Franco, were discovered conspiring. The General was punished, not by imprisonment or dismissal, but by transference to Morocco—a command which, as events showed, was the ideal post for continuing and completing his conspiracy. From Morocco General Franco was able to make contact with Mussolini; he was able to influence and bribe Moroccan chiefs; he was able in distant safety to organize a network of treachery among the army officers throughout the barracks in Spain itself.

In Rome and Berlin the Spanish Government was represented by Ambassadors with Fascist sympathies. They acted as the go-betweens of General Franco and Mussolini and Hitler. They plotted with foreign Fascist Governments to organize a rebellion against the Republican Government whose servants they were supposed to be. On the very day that General Franco gave the signal for the Fascist revolt to begin, they ran up the black flag of Fascism over their Embassy buildings. In Paris, London, and other capitals the ambassadors remained loyal, but everyone associated with events during the civil war knows how even Embassies which continued to fly the Republican flag were not free from Fascist spies.

These facts are of great significance to Socialists. It is not only in Spain that the officer class in the army and the higher officials of the civil service and diplomatic corps are drawn from the upper classes. These important positions are the practical monopoly of the sons of the wealthy in every country. Spain points the lesson in the clearest possible way. If any Socialist Government, *if any anti-Fascist Government*, leaves the reactionary classes in control

of the civil service and armed forces, it cannot count on loyal support from them in a crisis.

In Britain tribute is often paid to the political disinterestedness of the officer class in the armed forces and the above-politics character of the civil service. It is less than twenty-five years since the Curragh incident, when officers in the British army declared that they would not enforce legislation carried in the British Parliament to give Home Rule to Ireland—and Home Rule for Ireland is a minor issue compared with the issues which would be raised as the conflict with Fascism develops. Consider the mentality of the Service Clubs and of the higher civil servants and officer class in India and other parts of the Empire; consider how the permanent superior officials of Government departments resist the reforming zeal of Ministers—reflect on the outlook of those who control the British State machine, and the conflict which must inevitably arise between them and any Government which challenges reaction will at once be recognized. If a Government in Britain or any other country is ever to do anything to defeat Reaction, it must first clear the higher command of the State Services of the enemies of Socialism.

This consideration has direct relevance to the question of the Popular Front which we are considering. The Popular Front Government in Spain failed in this respect, and gave Fascism its opportunity. The Popular Front Government in France is failing in this respect, and many fear that in the long run it will be proved that it is giving Fascism its opportunity. Does anyone believe that a Popular Front Government in Britain—a coalition which would include Liberals—would be any more courageous? Neither of the Labour Governments which Britain has had dismissed army officers or civil servants or diplomats of the old régime. There was one exception only. Mr.

Arthur Henderson ended the period of office of Lord Lloyd, die-hard Imperialist in Egypt. A Liberal-Labour Government would be less bold. Formed to resist Fascist tendencies, it would leave in the key positions of the State administration the very officials who are sympathetic to those tendencies. Only a frankly revolutionary Government would dare to face the crisis which the wholesale deprivation of office of Generals, Admirals, Governors, Ambassadors, and permanent officials at Whitehall would create. This is another proof of the truth that any policy which involves identification with the Capitalist State cannot be the way of salvation to the working class.

At the risk of interrupting too far the description of developments in Spain, it is necessary to draw attention to one further fatal error which was involved in the inevitably moderate character of the Popular Front Government—an error which gave Fascism its second important opportunity. This was the error of failing to do anything to extend national freedom to Morocco.

The Moors, like the Irish, are always “agin the Government” because they regard any Government in Madrid as the enemy, as the conqueror and oppressor, as the Imperialist tyrant which refuses them national independence. Similarly, they regard any rebels against the Government at Madrid as allies. This attitude of mind made them easy game for General Franco. He assured the chiefs that he was their friend; he bribed them; he promised them national freedom if he were victorious; he held out to the troops a prospect of plunder and the rewards of victory to which they were accustomed. The consequence was that when he raised the standard of revolt he had the trained Moorish legionaries at his disposal and was able to pour them into Spain shipload by shipload and in aeroplane after aeroplane. These Moorish legionaries had a great deal to

do with the victories which the Fascists won in the early months of the civil war.

General Franco would never have been able to mislead the Moors if the Popular Front Government had won their confidence by taking steps to remove their injustices and to extend to them national liberty. Action of that kind would have made the Moors the friends instead of the enemies of Madrid. When the crisis came Madrid could have counted on their support.

This experience is profoundly important to all countries with Empires. In the British and French Empires, for example, there are peoples who are always "agin the Government" in London or Paris, and who would regard any rebels against those Governments as allies. The danger is aggravated by the fact that the military officers and even the civil administrators of the Imperialist Powers in such countries are predominantly of the reactionary type, and by the additional fact that in some parts of the British and French Empires—the Near East, for example—the leaders of the Nationalist Movement are already tending towards Fascism. It is not fanciful to visualize a situation either in the British or French Empires where the subject races would prove a thorn in the side of a weak "democratic" Government in a Fascist crisis.

By its very nature a Popular Front Government is inevitably timid. It is a coalition in which the most moderate section determines the character of the legislation and administration. The alliance with the Liberal Capitalists must be maintained; nothing must be done to alienate them.

In practice, to propose to undermine an Empire requires more courage than even drastic social proposals. The British Labour Government of 1929-31 did not dare to extend self-government to India because it depended on

Liberal support. It did not dare to release Indian political prisoners because the British Governors in India were opposed to that course, and because it knew that if the Governors resigned it would not hold office for a day. The consequence was that it had to suppress the civil disobedience movement in India, and become responsible for imprisoning 60,000 Indians. A Popular Front coalition would not be likely to do more than a Labour Government.

The fact is that only a Revolutionary Socialist Government in London or Paris would consider taking steps which would satisfy the Nationalist Movements in the British and French Empires. A Popular Front Government must always face the danger of the subject peoples allying themselves even with Fascist rebels to rend it. The weakness of the Spanish Popular Front Government in this respect was certainly a major factor in enabling the Spanish Fascists to plan their revolt on such formidable lines.

But let us return to the course of events in Spain. General Franco and the Fascist military officers had powerful allies among the Spanish feudal aristocracy, the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church (John McGovern, M.P., has published photographs of Fascist gatherings in Churches prior to the revolt), and from certain important Capitalists. Chief among the latter was Juan March, who had been deprived of his monopoly of the tobacco trade by the Government. March not only contributed substantially to the Fascist war-chest himself; he went to Germany and arranged for powerful financial assistance from there. All these conspiratorial preparations proceeded under the eyes of the Popular Front Government. It was not the type of Government which would take drastic action against either the military caste, the feudal class, the Church hierarchy, or powerful Capitalists.

The date of the Fascist putsch was carefully timed. At the end of July the period of compulsory service for one-third of the men in the army concluded. Recruits would enter the army directly from the homes of the workers and peasants. They would be under the influence of the challenging spirit which had swept the masses at the time of the election, whilst the men who had been three years in the forces were "conditioned", disciplined, obedient to their much-in-evidence officers. This was one of the reasons why the revolt was dated for the middle of July.

In fact, there is evidence that the privates in the army, when they were ordered to take to arms, seize the key buildings in the cities (prominent among them the churches), put machine-guns in position, and fire upon the crowds of workers, thought that they were suppressing a rebellion. What happened in Barcelona was typical of other towns.

The men in the army were told by their generals and officers that the anarchists had revolted. When they saw the workers marching on the barracks and church towers they mowed down the ranks of the advancing crowd with machine-gun fire, thinking that in so doing they were defending the Republic. It was only when the slogans of the workers reached their ears: "*You are being misled—it is your Generals who are betraying the Republic—Join with us—arrest them!*"—that they paused, listened, and turned on their officers and arrested them. The hundreds of workers who lost their lives in Barcelona were sacrificed by the failure of the Popular Front Government to clear its own armed forces of the Fascist officer class.

It is important to note that in all parts of Spain where the Fascists were overcome during the first days of their revolt, the defeat was due to the action of the workers and of their organizations. Immediately the Fascist putsch

began, the 'Trades Unions declared a general strike. Industry stopped ; the workers were out on the streets. Often they were unarmed or very badly armed ; but they raised their barricades, marched on the barracks, and in many places won over the soldiers and arrested the Fascist officers and generals. Had it not been for the action of the workers in these first few hours, General Franco would have won power almost unchallenged.

The second fact to note—and it is of even greater importance in considering the real nature of the struggle in Spain and the question of working-class policy—is this : the immediate challenge to the Fascists of the general strike was followed by the formation of Workers' Militia by the various working-class organizations, and it was these Workers' Militia which had to bear the brunt of the struggle against the invading Moors and Foreign Legion, and the sections of the regular army which continued to obey their Fascist officers. Everywhere the workers demanded arms from the Government, and almost without exception it was at those places where the workers obtained arms rapidly that the Fascists were defeated ; it was at those places where the arms were withheld that the Fascists were victorious.

The army of the Capitalist State had proved itself unreliable ; a new Workers' Army was created almost in a day. The arms were distributed through the workers' organizations. The C.N.T., the U.G.T., the Socialist Party, the P.O.U.M., the Communist Party—each mobilized its members in militias, selected its own officers, took over the barracks, drilled, learned to shoot, became the new armed power.

At that moment, if the significance of what had happened had been understood, the old Capitalist State could have been ended. Marx insisted that the class in society which controls the armed forces can control the

State. In Spain the workers and their organizations suddenly came into control of the armed power; they could have entered into control of the State. But their alliance with the Liberal Government, their commitments to support it, their identification with the Government and the Capitalist State of which it was the head, hindered and hamstrung them. They were tied to the Capitalist Government and the Capitalist State.

Once more the social revolution was sacrificed because the working class had departed from the fundamental principles of Marx.

CHAPTER VII

SOCIAL REVOLUTION OR CAPITALIST DEMOCRACY ?

OUR review of the Popular Front experiment in Spain up to this point has shown—

(1) That the weakness of the Liberal Government, returned as a result of the Popular Front victory, gave the Fascists their opportunity by (a) leaving them in key positions in the armed forces and diplomatic service ; (b) permitting them to plan their putsch ; (c) alienating the Moors through failure to extend to them national liberty, and (d) doing nothing to undermine the economic basis and resources of Fascism bound up with the Capitalist system.

(2) That the Socialist and Communist Parties were committed to support the Government and its " within Capitalism " policy, and accordingly (a) could not oppose effectively the weaknesses which gave Fascism its opportunity, and (b) could not seize power when the objective situation provided the opportunity—that is, when the working-class organizations proved that they were the real barrier to Fascism, first by their strike action and, second, by providing the main military force against the Fascist armies through their Workers' Militia. When the Government was compelled to distribute its arms through the Trades Unions, power was in fact in the hands of the workers ; they did not take advantage of this fact because of their political alliance with the Liberal Party which constituted the Government.

These are the first conclusions. Let us examine what followed.

The most significant incident reported from Spain during the first few weeks of the conflict was described by John McNair. When he reached the frontier he presented his British passport. The workers' official in the Passport Office looked at it and shook his head.

"That is the passport of a Capitalist Government," he said. "It is not enough."

"It carries a proper visa," said John McNair.

The worker shook his head again. "You may be a Fascist spy for all we know," he said doubtfully. "Have you nothing else?"

McNair produced a letter from the I.L.P. stating that he was taking greetings of solidarity and a gift of money to the Spanish workers.

"Why didn't you show me that at first, comrade?" said the worker, holding out his hand, his face all smiles. "That makes all the difference. I will give you a new passport—a Workers' Passport."

On a sheet of paper he typed out the object of McNair's mission and then below attached the stamps of seven working-class organizations—the Syndicalist Trade Union (C.N.T.), the Socialist Trade Union (U.G.T.), the Peasants' Union, the Workers' Party of Marxist Unity (P.O.U.M.), the Anarchists (F.A.I.), the Socialists and the Communists (afterwards united in the P.S.U.C.).

"With that passport," he said, "you will be welcomed everywhere in Workers' Spain."

McNair found that it was so. Driving from the frontier to Barcelona by night he passed through twenty-three villages. At the entrance to every village there was a double

barricade—an obstruction from left to right of the roadway leaving room only for one car to pass, then a space of ten yards, and then a similar obstruction from right to left of the roadway. A member of the Workers' Militia, rifle in hand, demanded to see papers. Often the militia-man could not read, but when, among the stamps at the bottom of McNair's authorization, he saw the symbol of his own organization, he waved the car on with a friendly "Salud", and with clenched fist raised.

I was in Spain a year later. At the frontier and frequently along the road our car was stopped as John McNair's had been. But now it was the British Government's passport which the officials and the militia men demanded to see.

Both at Valencia and Barcelona I heard that foreign Socialists were in prison because they had been found without passports from their Governments. At the cafés each night the police rounded up all who were without official passports. Authorizations from working-class organizations were no longer enough.

This contrast illustrates the change which took place in Spain during the first twelve months of the war.

In July, 1936, Barcelona was a revolutionary city. The workers had defeated Fascism through their own organizations. They had met the Fascist threat by a general strike. They had marched on the barracks and won over the soldiers. They had demanded arms from the Government, and each workers' organizations had contributed its militia to the anti-Fascist army. They had created a workers' police force. Red flags hung from every building. The workers and the soldiers thronged the streets singing the "International" and the "People's Hymn". The "bourgeois" were no longer to be seen. Everywhere were the triumphant workers.

I never had the privilege of seeing that revolutionary city, but I heard many descriptions of it. All the Press reports agreed about it—even the Communist press during the first few days. There is not a visitor to Barcelona in those exciting weeks of July, 1936, who did not tell that story.

When I was in Barcelona a year later I hardly saw a red flag. Instead, I saw the red, yellow and purple flag of the Republican Government. I never once heard the "International" or the "People's Hymn" sung in the streets. Even the greeting "Salud" was disappearing. I saw no workers' militia or workers' police; instead I saw the regular army, with an officer class specially uniformed, and the civil guards and assault guards of the old régime. The bourgeois were returning to the streets—the contrast in dress between the workers and the more wealthy was evident. I saw mere pleasure-seekers thronging the cafés. I saw tobacco being sold at exorbitant prices to those who could afford to pay—the traders who trafficked in it picked out the better dressed in the boulevards and restaurants—and I saw queues of workmen waiting outside the tobacco shops to get their small rations. I sought in vain for the revolutionary atmosphere which visitors told me they had felt "in the air" during the autumn of 1936. I found it only in small eating houses in the working-class districts. There the "revolution" was still spoken of.

In the spring of 1937 I heard a wounded British volunteer, returned from the Aragon front, speak at a London meeting. He described the changed Barcelona as I have described it, though then the change had not gone so far. "In December," he said, "the Hotel Colon—the headquarters of the Communist Party—displayed two huge coloured portraits of Lenin and Stalin. When I returned from the front to Barcelona in April there was only one

portrait—that of Stalin. I wonder how long the portrait of Stalin will remain.”

I made a point of looking at the Hotel Colon when I got to Barcelona. The portrait of Stalin had gone.

These changes represented much more than either revolution-weariness or war-weariness. They were the outward and visible signs of the change which had taken place in class power.

Let us look at what had happened.

In those parts of Spain where the workers defeated the Fascist putsch they were not satisfied with merely defending the “ democratic ” Republic. They and their organizations had won the victory ; instinctively they expressed the power which was theirs by pushing on to the social revolution. They took possession of everything—the railways, the trams and the underground system, the engineering and textile factories, the telephone exchanges (previously controlled by a Capitalist company), the workshops, the cafés, the hotels, the cinemas and theatres, the hospitals. They transformed hotels, private mansions and large Capitalist premises into Trade Union and Party headquarters. Everywhere in Fascist-free territory the peasants took possession of the estates of the wealthy landlords.

The Communist press (determined to limit the struggle in Spain to “ democracy ” within Capitalism) has denied the reality of this revolution. It has said that the only industrial concerns taken over were those necessary for war purposes, and that this was not more than the general practice of even Capitalist Governments in war-time. I can only say that a year later, despite the counter-revolution which by then had gone far, workers' control of industry,

transport, hotels, cafés, cinemas, and theatres remained. Everywhere the letters "C.N.T." and "U.G.T." had replaced the names of the previous Capitalist owners.

Indeed, I found this true to a greater extent than I expected. I knew, from my own information, despite Communist denials, that this industrial revolution had taken place in Catalonia, the historical revolutionary centre of Spain, but I was ready to believe that it had not taken place elsewhere. My greatest surprise was to find Valencia "collectivized". There, too, the industries, transport, hotels, cafés, cinemas and theatres had been taken over by the workers.

I did not visit Madrid, but I remember an article by a British Capitalist from Madrid which appeared in the *Evening Standard*, Lord Beaverbrook's paper, in the early months of the war. He warned his fellow-Capitalists that they must expect no returns on their investments because the workers had taken control of the factories, and transport. This did not happen to the same extent in Madrid as in Barcelona or Valencia, because Madrid is a more bourgeois city, a typical bureaucratic capital. But evidently the first instinctive action of the workers was to supplement the defeat of Fascism by the expropriation of Capitalist property.

My experience was the same in connection with the collectivization of agriculture—I found it extended further than I anticipated. Again I knew that it had taken place widely in Catalonia and in the Aragon Province, but I placed some credence in the Communist assertion that the mass of peasants were opposed to collectivization. Yet far away in the middle of the mountains of Levante I found in the town of Segorbe a flourishing collective to which the great majority of the peasants were attached.

The fact is that even a casual observer travelling in Spain must be impressed by the degree to which collectivization has gone. In towns and villages alike the announcements of collectives are to be seen on all sides. On the roads one continually meets lorries bearing notices that they carry goods produced by collectives.

I am not suggesting that this industrial revolution was general throughout Fascist-freed Spain. I do not know how far it occurred in the Basque Province and in other areas. But I am saying that it took place on a scale much greater than is generally allowed to be known, and that this scale was sufficient to be a determining factor if it had been used for that purpose.

The Communists argue that Spain was not ready for the social revolution as an alternative to Fascism. The fact is that in the key centres the workers instinctively answered the threat of Fascism by the industrial revolution. A greater part of Spain was ready in July, 1936, for the social revolution than of Russia in October, 1917.

Since this was the situation, how has it come about that the industrial revolution which the workers carried through was not pressed forward to the point of a political revolution—the establishment of Workers' Power and a Workers' State? Remember it was the workers who had broken the Fascist revolt in Madrid, Valencia, Barcelona and other centres by their general strike and their heroic assault on the barracks manned by the regular army. Remember it was the workers who had formed their militias, secured the necessary arms, and driven back the Fascist-led troops. Remember, it was the workers who had replaced the untrustworthy police by their own patrols. They had industrial power and military power. Why then did they not take full power over the State?

The first answer we have already seen—their leaders

demanded continued loyalty to the Popular Front Governments in Madrid and Catalonia, despite the non-revolutionary character of these Governments. Although the crisis had placed power at their disposal they maintained subservience to the bourgeois Liberal Governments to which in very different circumstances they had promised support.

It is necessary to differentiate between the Madrid and Catalan Governments. In Madrid the Social-Democratic and to a less extent the Communist ideology was dominant. The leaders of the workers did not think in terms of the social revolution—their thinking was limited to a bourgeois democratic alternative to Fascism. Even when the opportunity of the social revolution was placed in their hands it did not occur to them to seize it. They had neither the will, the spirit, nor the idea.

But in Barcelona it was different. There the Anarcho-Syndicalists supplemented by the P.O.U.M. were dominant. They were revolutionary by tradition, spirit and ideology. The Social-Democrats and Communists were weak; even when they united their influence was insignificant compared with that of the Syndicalist C.N.T., the Anarchist F.A.I. and the Marxist P.O.U.M. How was it that the opportunity for the completed revolution was not seized in Catalonia ?

A large measure of responsibility must be placed on the Anarchist philosophy of the C.N.T. and F.A.I. They did not believe in seizing State power. They thought that industrial and military power was enough. They had control of the factories, the army and the police. What more was required ?

For a time it seemed that they were correct. A Workers' Central Economic Council controlled industry and agriculture. Each of the workers' organizations had its representatives on the Council, and it reached all decisions

regarding the economic organization in the Province. Similarly there was a Workers' Military Council which controlled and co-ordinated the militia. It reached all decisions regarding the organization and conduct of the war against the Fascists. When the decisions had been made—either by the one Council or the other—they were taken to the Government, whose Ministers automatically stamped them. Effective power appeared to be with the workers.

The skeleton bourgeois Government was allowed to remain only as a convenience. The workers feared intervention by the Capitalist Governments outside Spain. Germany and Italy were already intervening; a Workers' Revolutionary Government in Catalonia might encourage the British Government to intervene as well. The Catalan workers had also to think of their relations with the Government at Madrid. Together they must fight against the Fascists; indeed, the Catalonian Government was subsidiary to the Central Government at Madrid, and it was necessary that they should co-operate. For these two reasons the Liberal ministers were permitted to remain in office as mere puppets. They always authorized the decrees of the Workers' Economic and Military Councils. Why trouble to displace them?

The Marxists of the P.O.U.M. challenged this attitude from the first. They wanted a Government representing the workers, the peasants and the militia. But for a time it appeared as though the Anarchist view of the insignificance of State power, so long as the workers and peasants controlled the factories, the land and the army, were correct. The bourgeois Government was a mere stamping machine.

Then came the next stage. In Madrid the supreme importance of the contribution which the workers and their organizations were making in the fight against the Fascists was recognized by a change of Government. The Liberal

administration gave place to a Coalition which still retained Liberals, but which had Largo Caballero, the Socialist leader, as Prime Minister, with Ministerial colleagues representing the other organizations. In Catalonia a similar change took place, and, reflecting the population of the Province, it was even more Leftward in character. The Government was dominantly proletarian, although there was still a minority of Liberal Ministers.

The Marxist P.O.U.M. hesitated whether to enter the Government. Loyal to the principle of the class struggle, its leaders disliked participation in a government which included bourgeois Liberals. But they secured a pledge that the Government would combine its military campaign against the Fascists with the maintenance of the revolution and the wholehearted programme of socialization; the war and the social revolution would remain inseparable. The P.O.U.M. therefore decided to enter the Government, and Andres Nin, its leader, became Minister of Justice.¹

Andres Nin seized the opportunity to destroy the Capitalist penal code, and the Capitalist judicial administration. He established a Socialist penal code and People's Tribunals in their place.

In view of the dominant proletarian character of the Government and its revolutionary aims, it would be difficult to say that the participation of P.O.U.M. was a breach of Marxist principles; but the subsequent decision (opposed

¹ On September 17, 1936, it was reported in the *Times* that Joaquin Maurin, co-leader of the P.O.U.M. with Nin, had been shot by the Fascists. A year later it was learned that this report was untrue—Maurin was a prisoner in Fascist hands, but he had disguised himself and his identity had only just been discovered. At the moment of writing this note Maurin has been placed at the disposal of the Fascist military authorities at Saragossa. His fate is uncertain. I know Maurin and regard him as one of the ablest of the younger generation of the Socialist leaders in Europe.

by P.O.U.M.) to abolish the Workers' Economic and Military Councils and to absorb their functions in the Government was undoubtedly a grave error.

The argument in favour of this step was plausible. The workers' organizations dominated the Government. It was the central authority. Why duplicate administration by maintaining separate organizations for controlling economic and military activity?

But this argument overlooked the fundamental Marxist principle that the organs of the Capitalist State cannot be relied upon to serve as the instruments of the workers' revolution. It forgot the principle stated by Marx and Engels in their analysis of the Paris Commune: "The working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made State machinery and wield it for its own purposes." As a tactic the workers are justified in using the Capitalist State, but they must not succumb to the delusion that they can achieve the revolution by the Capitalist State. In the circumstances of Catalonia it can be argued that it was desirable to continue the skeleton of the old State as a means of contact with the Madrid Government and the Capitalist Governments outside Spain. It can be argued that Nin was justified in utilizing his authority as Minister of Justice to inaugurate a Socialist penal code and People's Tribunals, that the Minister of Education was justified in using the State machinery to co-ordinate and develop the new secular schools on modern Socialistic lines.

But the administration itself remained that of the Capitalist State. The personnel of the civil service, however sincerely anti-Fascist, was not Socialist, and remained embedded in the old traditions. It was a bureaucratic service, with no direct contact with the workers' organizations, despite the working-class representatives at its head. It represented, not the revolution, but the old regime. It resisted change

and tended to revert to type whenever opportunity allowed.

In such circumstances it was a disastrous mistake to take control of industry, the army and the police from Workers' Councils directly responsible to the workers and to hand them over to the old State administration. At the least, the Workers' Councils should have remained the administrative authority under the chairmanship of the Ministers concerned. As events developed, this change proved of critical importance in the sabotaging of the revolution.

Meanwhile events were happening outside Spain which were destined to have a decisive influence on the revolution. Soviet Russia began to modify the attitude of neutrality which it had first adopted in loyalty to its alliance with France. It saw Italy and Germany actively assisting the Spanish Fascists. It realized that a Fascist victory in Spain would be a disastrous preliminary to the World War—that World War which dominated its mind and determined its policy. A Fascist Spain in alliance with Italy and Germany would cripple the military aid which France could give to Russia; a Fascist Spain would involve the French troops fighting simultaneously on its eastern front against Germany, its south-eastern front against Italy, and its south-western front against Spain, leaving a large part of the German army free to march against Russia; a Fascist Spain would provide Italy and Germany with supplies of iron ore and other materials necessary for their rearmament. Fascist control of the western mouth of the Mediterranean would cut off the French troops in Africa. It would also seriously weaken the naval power of Britain—and Russia still hoped that Britain would eventually become an ally of herself and France against the Fascist Powers.

Therefore Russia began to help Spain—first by the provision of foodstuffs and afterwards, as Italian and

German military assistance to the Fascists continued, by the provision of armaments and military technicians. It gave notice to the Non-Intervention Committee that it would not regard itself as bound to refrain from sending arms to any greater extent than practised by Italy and Germany.

This was one side of Russian policy ; there was another side.

Russia did not want to endanger its political and military alliance with France by sacrificing the friendship of the Liberal Capitalists in the French Government. It did not want to estrange the British Government. *Therefore, in line with its general policy of not antagonizing the " democratic " Capitalist Powers* (as described in an earlier chapter) *it limited the purpose of its support to the Spanish Government to the restoration of bourgeois democracy.*

The Liberal Capitalists of France feared a social revolution in Spain as much as they feared Fascism in Spain ; a social revolution across the frontier would be too close an example to the French workers. The British Capitalists who had heavy investments in Spain appeared willing even to sacrifice British Imperialist interests because of their fear of a Red Spain ; this was the explanation of what was often in effect a pro-Franco policy by the British Government. To alienate the French and British Governments would be to destroy the whole framework of Russia's foreign policy. Therefore it must be made clear to the Spanish Government that if it was to receive Russian arms they must be used for the objective of restoring bourgeois democracy only and not for the social revolution.

Russia recognized that in the case of the Madrid Government it would have no difficulty in this matter ; the Social Democrats who controlled it had no thought of going beyond bourgeois democracy. But in the case of Catalonia, the

position was more difficult. The Government was pledged to maintain the identity of the war and the social revolution, and to carry through a policy of socialization, whilst the army on the Aragon Front was largely composed of C.N.T. and P.O.U.M. militia, who, if they got arms in their hands, would probably keep hold of them until the social revolution had been achieved.

The greatest obstacle to the Russian policy was the P.O.U.M. It was revolutionary, and it had no delusions about Soviet Russia. Although small in numerical strength compared with the C.N.T., it had a clearer conception of what to do and its leadership was not restricted by Anarchist doubts about the use of the State. It was Marxist not only in theory but in practice. It was also disconcertingly open in its criticism of the Soviet bureaucracy in Russia ; it was not prepared to pay the price of silence for the assistance offered by Russia to Spain. About the Moscow trials, for example, it was vigorously sceptical. It declined to believe that Trotsky and the revolutionary colleagues of Lenin had become agents of German Fascism. The fact that the leaders of the P.O.U.M., Andres Nin and Joaquin Maurin, had been in Moscow and had broken with the Russian leadership, intensified the antagonism.

It was this last fact, and the P.O.U.M. criticism of the Moscow trials, which gave the Communist International its line. It would denounce the P.O.U.M. in the same manner that it had denounced the Russian critics of Stalin. The P.O.U.M. leaders were also "Trotskyists"! They were also agents of Fascism! It mattered not that Trotsky had repudiated the P.O.U.M., or that hundreds of P.O.U.M. members had died fighting the Fascists. Henceforth they were "Trotskyist-Fascists".

The campaign of abuse and slander which the Communist International and the Communist Party began against

the P.O.U.M. was almost incredible. The P.O.U.M. was denounced as the "Fifth Column" of General Franco—that is, as a military arm of the Fascists, serving their purposes in Madrid, Valencia and Barcelona whilst pretending to be their enemies. It was alleged to be a spy organization of General Franco. The P.O.U.M. regiments at the front, despite their courage against the Fascists, were held up to contumely as deliberately treacherous, retreating or refusing to advance on critical occasions in order to give the Fascists the victory. The P.O.U.M. was charged with being involved in a plot to assassinate Largo Caballero, the Socialist Prime Minister, Azana, the President, and La Passonaria, the popular woman Communist leader.

Not a jot or tittle of evidence was forthcoming to support these charges, but they were broadcast throughout Spain and the world through the literature of the Spanish Communist Party and the Communist International. They were first received with a gasp of amazement and incredibility in Spain; but constant repetition, combined with the new popularity of the Spanish Communist Party following the arrival of Russian arms, began to have some effect. The membership of the C.N.T. and of the P.O.U.M. itself were uninfluenced, but some of the elements which disliked the revolutionary activities and objective of the P.O.U.M. began to believe. And outside Spain in every country the Communist campaign spread its poison. The P.O.U.M. fell under suspicion not only in direct Communist Party circles, but in those wider organizations of assistance for "Spanish democracy" which the Communists took the initiative in organizing—the Spanish Medical Aid Committees, The Friends of Spain Committees, and the Liberal and intellectual and religious groups which were encouraged on democratic grounds to join in the crusade against Spanish Fascism.

The Communists were not a strong force in Spain when the Russian arms began to arrive, but they cleverly exploited the enthusiasm aroused, and their numbers and influence grew enormously. This can be easily understood. The Spanish people felt themselves deserted by all the Governments of the world. Only the Mexican Government had permitted the provision of arms ; despite the supplies from Italy and Germany to the Fascists the " democratic " Governments of France and Britain maintained an embargo. Not unnaturally, the Spanish people had a sense of frustration and bitterness ; they knew they could overcome the Fascists easily with an equality of arms, but obsolete arms, sticks and bare fists could not stand up against the bombing planes, tanks and machine-guns which were at the disposal of General Franco, thanks to Italy and Germany.

Despair was changed to hope by the coming of Russian arms. The whole psychology altered. Everywhere Soviet Russia was acclaimed as the saviour of Spain, everywhere the Communists of Russia were applauded as the only real comrades of the Spanish people. Inevitably the Spaniards began to turn with sympathy to the Spanish Communist Party.

There was another factor which increased the enthusiasm. At a critical moment the columns of the International Brigade began to arrive from all countries ; and it was the experienced soldiers of the Brigade who saved Madrid when it was menaced by the Fascists. It is true there were comrades from abroad fighting with the Spanish workers before the International Brigade was formed. The Anarchists had an International Column, and there were Germans, Italians, French, Belgians, and comrades of other nationalities fighting with the P.O.U.M. militia. But these expressions of solidarity were not made on the scale or with the spectacular effect of the International Brigade, and did not have the same mass influence.

The Brigade was not officially Communist. Many Socialists and class-conscious workers unattached to the Communist Party were in its ranks. But the Communist Parties of Europe were its originators, and when the Brigade reached Spain it functioned almost entirely under Communist Party auspices. As the contingents arrived in Barcelona, they were marched through the streets behind Communist Party banners and bands and accompanied by Communist processions. The enthusiasm aroused by the Brigade was capitalized for the Communist Party.

It is necessary to understand the effect of these two developments—the coming of arms and the coming of men—to appreciate how the Communist Party advanced to a position where it could undertake an offensive against the P.O.U.M. The campaign of slander of the P.O.U.M. would not have been sufficient in itself, but when the attack on the P.O.U.M. was supplemented by such uncontrovertible demonstrations of help from the parties of the Communist International, the Spanish people naturally began to pay attention to its words and to follow its lead. The Communist Party was in the ascendant.

It was in this psychological situation that the Communists struck their first blow. They insisted on the dismissal of the P.O.U.M. representative from the Catalonian Government as the price of the provision of Russian arms to Catalonia.

The first indication of this new move came from the representative of the Soviet Government in Barcelona. He demanded the exclusion of the P.O.U.M. from the administration. The response could not have been to his liking. He was told by the Government that it could not tolerate the interference of a foreign representative in the internal affairs of Spain.

But the Spanish Communist Party had been given its

cue. It followed up the declaration of the Soviet representative by making the following demands—

1. The exclusion of the P.O.U.M. from the Government and from all administrative posts under the Government.
2. The abolition of the Workers' Militia and the "militarization" of the army.
3. The separation of the War from the Revolution.

The Government was made to understand that unless these demands were accepted, no Russian arms would be available for Catalonia.

This ultimatum was at first sternly resisted not only by the P.O.U.M., but also by the powerful C.N.T. Finally a compromise was reached. The C.N.T. agreed to the exclusion of the P.O.U.M. from the Government on the condition that the representative of the Communist Party also withdrew. But on all the other issues the C.N.T. stood firm. It insisted on retaining P.O.U.M. members in administrative positions—Dr. Tusso, for example, remained at the head of the Health Commission—and it would not accept the dissolution of the Workers' Militia or the abandonment of the revolution. The Communists were not yet sufficiently strong to press for their full demands, and on this basis the crisis appeared to be overcome.

But not in reality. Andres Nin, the P.O.U.M. Minister of Justice, was deposed. The representative of the P.S.U.C. (the United Socialist-Communist Party) withdrew from the Government. But this did not mean that the Communist Party membership of the Government ended ; it was maintained through the Communist representatives of the U.G.T. The Communists had succeeded in their object of ousting the P.O.U.M. from the Government whilst maintaining their own voice within it.

As for the other demands, they were prepared to wait for a time. The important first step was to destroy the influence of the P.O.U.M. Once it was out of the Government, the Communists could proceed to eliminate its members from all administrative posts. And the liquidation of the social revolution and the abolition of the Workers' Militia? That was simple. Russian arms could still be withheld from the Catalonian armies until there was a guarantee that the anti-Fascist struggle would be limited to the objective of bourgeois democracy, and until the Workers' Militia had been disbanded in favour of the usual form of Capitalist State Army.

This is no prejudiced view of the Communist Party tactic.

Russian arms were in fact withheld from the Aragon Front until the Workers' Militia had been transformed into a Government army, with its highly-paid officer class responsible not to the workers but to a bourgeois-manned Ministry of War. By that time socialization had long ceased to be the policy of the Government—indeed, the Government had become an instrument of obstructing, undermining and liquidating socialization. And P.O.U.M. members had been removed from their administrative posts to prison cells.

This final development of the "no revolution" tactic of the Popular Front—no, not *final*, for the end has yet to come—must be described in another chapter.

CHAPTER VIII

THE RETREAT FROM THE SOCIAL REVOLUTION

THE internal policy of the new Catalonian Government, once the P.O.U.M. had been ousted and the Communist Party (thanks to the authority it had acquired by the dependence of Spain on Russian arms) had become dominant, was directed to four objectives—

1. The destruction of the Workers' Militia and its replacement by a Regular Army of the old pattern.
2. The destruction of the Workers' Police Patrol and replacement by a Police Force of the old pattern.
3. The disarming of the workers.
4. The limitation of Workers' Control of industry, the restoration of the property rights of the small bourgeoisie (the shopkeepers and the land-owning peasants), and the restriction particularly of agricultural collectivization.

This programme, pressed forward with determination by the Communist Party, suited the Liberal elements in the Government admirably. The one opposing element in the Government was the Syndicalist and still revolutionary C.N.T., but it was in a minority and was driven from compromise to compromise. The second Trade Union organization—the U.G.T.—was Communist controlled in Catalonia, and its membership, limited to a large extent to “white-collar” workers, was moderate and non-revolutionary.

It was claimed that this programme was essential in

order to secure victory over the Fascists. It was urged that a unified command of the army under the Government was necessary, and that military discipline and control must replace what was described as the "happy-go-luck" methods of the Workers' Militia; that a State Police Force must be introduced to establish discipline behind the lines; that discipline must be imposed from above in industry in order to improve the supply of war materials and other essentials; that the support of the small bourgeoisie for the purposes of the war must be obtained, and for this reason collectivization must be restricted.

There must be unity (so ran the argument) of all "good Spaniards" in a war of "national independence" against the Italian, German and Moorish invaders with the object of re-establishing the authority of the constitutionally-elected government of Spain. The tri-colour national flag of Spain must replace the red flag. The social revolution must be liquidated; it must be a war only for the respectable purpose of restoring bourgeois democracy. That would be calculated to win the support of the "democratic" Capitalist Governments of the world, and in assisting it Soviet Russia would not alienate her desired allies.

Superficially this case appeared strong. Let us examine it.

No one will challenge the fact that a unified military command was urgently required. There was little unity in strategy between the commands of the different fronts, and there was often an absence of proper co-ordination between the Workers' Militia of various sections occupying different parts even of one front.

But the need for such unity of command was not the real issue in dispute. *The issue was under whose control the unity should take place.* The C.N.T. and the P.O.U.M, insisted that the army should remain a workers' army

and that the military technicians administering the unified command should be responsible to a Workers' Military Council. A Workers' Army or a Capitalist State army—that was the real point of difference.

One can understand the shock received by those brought up in the military tradition when they saw the democratic character and practices of the Workers' Militia. Films of the Spanish war—such as the C.N.T. film “Fury Over Spain”—have illustrated the contrast between the workers' army in Spain and the “militarized” armies of the Capitalist States: for example, the lack of military precision on the march; the mingling of the commanders with the men on terms of absolute equality and comradeship; the absence of all formalities indicative of differences of rank, such as saluting of officers by men. But it should be remembered that the Workers' Militia was an improvised army which spontaneously arose in the crisis following the desertion of a considerable part of the regular army to the Fascists. It was largely untrained, un-uniformed, and ill-armed. There is no reason to think that, with experience, equipment and co-ordination, it could not have become a very effective military force. Indeed, I have heard it said by men who had experienced military discipline, as for example by Mr. Eric Blair, who, before joining the P.O.U.M. militia, served in the North-West Frontier Police, that the qualities of co-operation and enthusiasm to be found in the revolutionary army of the workers, as he saw them in the later months of 1936, and the early months of 1937, more than compensated for the absence of formal, mechanical discipline.

For this workers' army an army of the Capitalist State pattern was substituted. The tightening up of disciplined efficiency was not the significant thing; the co-ordination of military strategy under a unified command was not

the significant thing. The need for these was admitted, and could have taken place without destroying the workers' militia. The significant thing was the change in the whole character of the army. It ceased to be a workers' army for the defence of the social revolution, and became a Capitalist army for the defence of the bourgeois State.

In the Workers' Militia, there was equality of pay. Men and officers alike received ten pesetas a day; they were all comrades together in the fight against Fascism and for the social revolution. Officers were obeyed, not because they were of a different class or belonged to a more highly-paid status, not because they had military authority behind them and could impose their will by penalties of degradation, imprisonment, or death, but because they had been chosen by their comrades as leaders on the grounds of their qualities of personality or military experience.

When the army reverted to the old State pattern the officers were again made a separate caste. The pay of the men was *reduced* from ten to eight pesetas a day, whilst the following scale of payment was introduced for their superiors—

Second lieutenants	..	25 pesetas a day		
First lieutenants	..	39	„	„
Captains	..	50	„	„
Lieutenant-colonels	..	100	„	„

The officers were not chosen by the men, but appointed from the higher command. They were given better uniforms than the men, better food, better billets. They became a "bourgeois" class in the army; indeed, they were largely drawn from the bourgeois class in society.

When I was in Spain in July, 1937, the "salud" and clenched fist, which had at first been symbols of equality and comradeship in the common fight against Fascism

and for the social revolution, were already becoming symbols of inequality in the army. The "salud" was being changed into a salute. It was being used by the men as a symbol of recognition of the higher status of the officer class.

Let no reader regard these as formal, routine happenings. They reflect the fundamental change which had taken place in the Spanish struggle. It began as a class fight of the workers against Fascism. On that basis it inevitably became a fight for the social revolution; a class fight on a class basis could have no other conclusion. But then the Popular Front alliance with the Liberal class restrained and re-directed it; and finally Communist Party influence, made powerful by Russian arms, combined with Social-Democratic moderation to complete the change. Not social revolution, but the restoration of the democratic Capitalist State, became the objective of the war. Many of those appointed to the higher command in the new State army, a large part of its officer class, were enemies of the social revolution, and in a crisis would be against the working class.

The same process took place in the case of the police. When the Workers' Patrol was replaced by the State Police it was made a condition that its members must not belong to any working-class organization. In actual fact, the Communist Party took control of its higher command, whilst the membership was largely recruited from the old police force, the middle class and the "white-collar" workers. It was a typical police force of a Capitalist Government, dependable in a critical situation to defend the bourgeois State against the working class.

The abolition of the Workers' Patrols was justified on the grounds (a) that they could not control crime—people were being "taken for rides" at night and "bumped

off"—and (b) that they were acting in the interests of the working-class organizations which controlled them rather than for the community.

As regards the first point, the charges of assassination were sensationally exaggerated, and there was no case for thinking that they would have been less under the control of a State police force. Under the conditions which existed in Barcelona it was inevitable that violence against those who were suspected of being Fascist sympathisers should occur. Similar things happen during a state of tension in other cities, despite a strong State police force. They happen in America when feeling among the Negroes runs high. They happened in Ireland—and even in British-administered Belfast—during the height of the Catholic-Protestant tension. State Police could not have stopped it happening in Barcelona any more than the Workers' Patrols.

And what is undoubtedly true, on the evidence of those who were in the city, is this: the standards of general conduct under the Workers' Patrols improved. Many of the brothels were closed, drunkenness was rarely seen in the streets, and theft decreased almost to vanishing-point. An English friend who was in Barcelona in the autumn of 1936 wrote to me enthusiastically about the moral standards of the city. "This used to be one of the most vice-ridden places in Europe," he wrote. "Now it is a clean, healthy workers' city. Idle luxury and the vice which accompanies it have gone. The streets are thronged with workers and soldiers, and there is a feeling everywhere that we are brothers in the social revolution. In this atmosphere of comradeship there is little need to preserve law and order. Only a few Workers' Patrols are to be seen, and they are regarded as comrades like everyone else." That was in September, 1936. Now the old Barcelona is

returning. Luxury is again showing its face ; and with it, despite the State police force, crime and vice are returning.

It is true that the Workers' Patrols acted in the interests of the working class. The social revolution was their *raison d'être*. They were the instruments of maintaining the new Socialist penal code which Andres Nin inaugurated.

But it is not true that during the social revolution period in Barcelona they acted in the interests of one section of the working class against other sections. That may have happened in certain cases after January, 1937, but the responsibility must be placed on the Communist Party, whose policy, beginning with the campaign of slander against the P.O.U.M. and proceeding to its subsequent manœuvring against the C.N.T., led to the division of the working class. It was only when the different workers' organizations felt it necessary to protect their interests against each other that they were tempted to use their police for their separate purposes. The Communist Party must bear the responsibility not only for creating this division, but for maintaining it. It is a matter of historical record that during this period a conference was held representing all sections of the anti-Fascist forces except the Communist Party, and that a decision was taken to stop the attacks on each other and to unite against the Fascists. The Communist Party was invited to attend but declined to do so.

The third objective of the government in domestic policy was to disarm the workers. We have seen that it was the arming of the workers which brought about the defeat of the Fascists in Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia and other places. The workers regarded their arms as the guarantee of the liberties which they had won, and resented bitterly the order to surrender arms.

The workers' organizations had had arms for their

militia ; the Workers' Patrols had limited arms in reserve for their duties ; some individual workers had pistols and small arms. In addition it is likely that certain of the working-class organizations had hidden arms. The Communist Party made charges against the C.N.T. in this respect, and the C.N.T. made charges against the Communist Party, probably with some truth on both sides. The P.O.U.M. was also charged by the Communists with secreting arms, but when street fighting occurred in Barcelona during the May days the P.O.U.M. was found to have practically no arms, even at its headquarters.

It was not so much the actual effect of the " disarm " order as the distrust of the workers which it reflected which caused indignation. Outside Spain it has been argued that the order was justified by the need for all possible arms at the front. In so far as heavy arms were retained by any of the organizations, this is the case ; but it was not this aspect of the Government's decree which aroused resentment. It was the searching of workers in the streets and their homes by Assault Guards and State police which caused the anger. This made them feel that they were once again a subject class, and that the hand of the Government was against them as in the old days. The revolution, dependent upon an armed working class, was over.

But most open in its counter-revolutionary effect was the limitation and sabotaging of collectivization. The Government had to proceed cautiously in the towns. The workers had experienced the freedom and equality of collectivization and would not give up their rights easily. Moreover, in the larger factories, mills and workshops no alternative was possible. The Capitalists had fled and the Trade Unions were in unchallengeable control. All the Ministry could do was to ask that in the case of the war industries a Government delegate should sit on the Workers'

Committees of Management and share responsibility with them.

There were spheres, however, where Government influence against collectivization could be made effective. This was particularly the case in respect of the distribution of milk and foodstuffs. As soon as a Communist Minister of Supplies was appointed he destroyed the system of distribution through the Transport Workers' Union and the workers' organizations, and revived the functions of the private shopkeepers. One of the chief economic aims of the Government was to assist the private shopkeeper.

But it was in relation to the peasants' collectives that the opposition of the Government went furthest. It would be a consistent revolutionary policy if the peasants generally were not ready for collectivization to decide that the tactic should be pursued of permitting peasant proprietorship, relying on education and the example of such model collectives as could be formed to encourage the peasantry towards socialization. But under Communist leadership the Governments in Spain—both the Central and the Catalonian Governments—went much further than that. They actively discouraged collectivization. I had read of this before visiting Spain. There was a sentence in H. N. Brailsford's article in *The New Statesman and Nation* (May 29, 1937) which remained in my mind: "Frankly and decidedly the Communist Party has discouraged every avoidable act of socialization—some of course were not avoidable, since fields had to be tilled and factories kept going." But despite my understanding of the general Communist Party line of "no revolution—only bourgeois democracy", the old traditions of Communism still lingered in my mind, and I found it difficult to believe that those who called themselves Communist could actually oppose collectivization. But I found it was so.

I went to a town in the mountains of Levante, Segorbe, a small town with a population of 7,000. There was a flourishing agricultural collective there—seventy of the ninety peasants had joined. No compulsion had been used ; the richer peasants had been permitted to remain outside the collective, although the advantages of combination were proving so clear that they were sending their supplies to the large cities through the collective. There was no Communist Party in the town, but propagandists arrived to hold a recruiting meeting for Party membership—and *they appealed to the peasant proprietors and private shop-keepers to join the Communist Party on the ground that it was opposing collectivization.*

Before going to Spain I read Communist Party complaints that the C.N.T. was enforcing collectivization on an unwilling peasantry. Such cases may have occurred incidentally, but they certainly did not represent C.N.T. policy. Both Anarchist philosophy and practice are against compulsion, and among Spanish Anarchists I found this not only a matter of theory, but of temperament and behaviour.

Think back to July, 1936—the defeat of the Fascists by the workers in the big cities, the seizure of the factories by the workers and of the land by the peasants, the formation of the workers' militia and police patrols, the achievement of the industrial revolution, the sense of workers' power. Think of that and think of the revolution being undermined step by step. Then it is possible to understand the bitterness of working-class feeling, particularly in cities like Barcelona, where revolutionary convictions were strong.

The protest against the retreat from the revolution was

voiced by the P.O.U.M., and to a considerable extent by the C.N.T., though its representation in the Government made opposition difficult. As days passed and evidences of a return to the bourgeois State became clearer, the bitterness increased, especially against the war-time profiteering and luxury which were beginning to show their faces. The P.O.U.M. began to call for a halt in the counter-revolutionary process.

The feeling of antagonism between the revolutionists and the bourgeois democrats (the C.N.T. and the P.O.U.M. on the one side, and the Communist-dominated P.S.U.C. and, to a lesser extent, the U.G.T., on the other) was greatly intensified by the assassination first of an Anarchist leader, and then of a P.S.U.C. leader. The funeral of the latter was made an occasion for a great political demonstration. The procession of Party members was followed by a tremendous display of Assault Guards, State Police and Government forces. The C.N.T. regarded this as a challenge.

May Day—the historic day of working-class demonstrations—approached. There was fear of a clash. Demonstrations were prohibited, and on all sides the desire to prevent an outbreak of violence was so great that the leaders secured obedience to the prohibition. But underneath the fires burned.

I am not going to be dogmatic about the details of how the Barcelona conflict of May 3rd began. The C.N.T. and the P.O.U.M. tell one story; the Communist Party another. The significant thing is not how it began, but how quickly it spread until the mass of the workers were involved. This is proof of the depth and width of the feeling.

It is undisputed that the Government decided to occupy the Telephone building and to disarm its workers, and that the C.N.T. workers who controlled it resisted. The C.N.T. had seized the Telephone building on July 19th from the

Fascists—the telephone service had previously been a private Capitalist concern—and had administered the service ever since. They took pride in their original success in capturing the building, and in their subsequent control. Their red and black flag flew on the tower.

The Communist Party makes the charge that the C.N.T. sabotaged Government use of the telephones. The C.N.T. deny it, pointing out that the C.N.T. was part of the Government, that a Government delegate served on the committee which controlled the exchange, and that U.G.T. members were also on this committee. It is impossible to judge this question ; but it is not impossible to judge the significance of what followed.

Within an hour of the firing of the first shots at the Telephone building, the workers in Barcelona were on strike from one end of the city to the other. They came out spontaneously ; no organization called on them to do so. Barricades were raised on the streets. On one side of the barricades were the mass of workers, including the C.N.T. supported by the P.O.U.M. On the other side were the Assault Guards, the State Police, the Communists and the Liberal Republicans. The members of the U.G.T. largely kept away. There was a clear class division : the workers versus the forces of the bourgeois State, the middle class and, in accordance with their “ no revolution ” line, the Communists.

The struggle continued for four days. On the second day it was clear that the workers were on top. Every part of Barcelona, except a limited central section occupied by Government buildings, was in their hands. The hills overlooking Barcelona were in their hands. Yet the C.N.T. and the P.O.U.M. refrained from seizing power.

Why? First, because they feared foreign Capitalist intervention ; British and French warships were already

steaming towards Barcelona. Second, because it was realized that even if power were taken by the C.N.T. and the P.O.U.M. in Catalonia, the Valencia Government would have an overwhelming advantage in arms, and might make such power short-lived. Third, because there was an unwillingness to precipitate a civil war between the anti-Fascist forces behind the lines, so opening the way to a Fascist advance on the front.

For these three reasons, and because the C.N.T. leadership was divided, the P.O.U.M. gave instructions to its members to remain on the defensive only, and not to fire unless fired upon. The P.O.U.M. was charged by the Communist Party with planning the "revolt"; sufficient answer to this is the fact that the P.O.U.M. was utterly unprepared with arms, and that none of the P.O.U.M. militia left the front to participate in the struggle, and that when the struggle began steps were taken by the P.O.U.M. to prevent them returning to Barcelona. The Communists have actually asserted that the I.L.P. contingent, which was on leave in Barcelona during the "Resistance", were brought back specially to assist in the revolt. The truth is that they were in Barcelona a week before the attack on the Telephone building took place, and that they were enjoying the normal leave after three months' service at the front.

When the "Resistance" was called off the workers still had a sense of victory. They had demonstrated their strength. But once more they overlooked the grim reality of the power of the State which was in the hands of those who had been on the other side of the barricades. Five thousand armed guards arrived from Valencia and controlled the streets, rifle in hands. Hundreds of workers were forcibly disarmed. Their press was censored, so that no criticism was permitted, no leadership which conflicted

with the Government was permitted. The psychology of subjection and defeat began to replace the sense of victory and strength.

Meanwhile, there had also been important changes in the Central Government at Valencia. It had been reconstructed so that both the Trade Union organizations—the Syndicalist C.N.T. and the Socialist U.G.T.—withdrew. It became a Government only of Liberals, Right-Wing Socialists and Communists. If one could visualize a Government in this country of Mr. Lloyd George, Sir Herbert Samuel, the late Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, and Dr. Hugh Dalton, with Mr. Harry Pollitt and Mr. William Gallacher (transformed into moderate “democrats” by Moscow orders), we should have a parallel to the Valencia Government which replaced the Government of which Largo Caballero, the secretary of the U.G.T., had been Socialist Prime Minister. The mass working-class organizations were no longer within it.

The case against Largo Caballero, put forward by Prieto, the Right Socialist leader, and the Communists, was that he was too old for his job, and that the proper organization of the war demanded the separation of the offices of the Premier and the Ministry of War which he combined. The new Government was announced as a Government of Victory. In fact, there were much deeper political reasons behind the change. In the first place, Largo Caballero when Prime Minister resisted tendencies to direct the policy of the Government towards a line acceptable to the diplomacy of Britain, France and Soviet Russia. Secondly, he resisted demands for the suppression of the P.O.U.M. with its inconvenient insistence that the social revolution rather than the restoration of bourgeois democracy should be the workers’ objective as the alternative to Fascism. In a sentence, he resisted the Communist

Party line. The Communists, in alliance with his rival in the Socialist Party, Prieto, brought about his defeat.

The ground was now ready for a further offensive against the social revolution. The Communist Party seized the opportunity of its increased influence in the Central Government to strike at the P.O.U.M. It struck hard.

The P.O.U.M. Central Council of forty members, including its best known leaders—Andres Nin, Julien Gorkin, Andrade and others—were arrested. The Assault Guards took possession of its buildings. Four hundred of its local officials were arrested. Its papers were suppressed. Its hospitals, Red Aid headquarters, and its cultural and educational institutes did not escape. They were occupied by the State forces. The Socialists from abroad who had supported the P.O.U.M. were rounded up and put in prison. Superficially, the P.O.U.M. was totally crushed.

This coup d'état against the P.O.U.M. was carried out by the Secret Service Police, of which Communists had taken control, and which they organized on the model of the Russian O.G.P.U. In concentrating upon police control the Communists were of course pursuing the accepted historical tactic of a political party aiming at getting dominating power in its hands. The army and the police—whoever controls them controls in the last resort the power of the State. It was the tactic of Hitler in Germany. Before he obtained complete power he insisted on control of the police as a condition of entering the preceding Coalition Government. It was the obvious tactic for the Communists to carry out in Spain.

Yet, I acknowledge that when I visited Spain three weeks after these events I was surprised by the absolute dominance of the political arm of the police which the Communists had secured. They acted with little reference to the Government. When our delegation interviewed the

Minister of Justice he did not hide his resentment of the manner in which the Secret Police had acted without the authority of the Minister of Interior and of himself. For example, the P.O.U.M. leaders had been transferred from Barcelona (where the authorities were opposed to the arrests) to Madrid (where the Communists were in control) without even the knowledge of the Valencia Government. In fact, when we arrived in Barcelona the Minister did not know where they were, and the Minister of Interior had to go to Madrid to find out.

The most remarkable instance of the manner in which the Secret Service Police superseded the authority of the responsible Ministers was the case of Rovira, the Commander of the 29th Division on the Aragon Front, which by this time had been incorporated in the Government army. He was a member of the P.O.U.M., and was arrested. The soldiers belonging to the Division immediately telegraphed to Señor Prieto, the Minister of War, asking for an explanation. He wired back that neither he nor anyone at the War Office had any knowledge of the arrest, and that he would make immediate enquiries.

Consider the significance of this—the Commander of an Army Division at the front was arrested by the political police without the Minister for War knowing anything about it! Prieto evidently put his foot down. Shortly afterwards Rovira was liberated.

The fact is that the Secret Service Police functioned as an arm of the Communist Party to suppress its political opponents in other sections of the working-class movement. Hundreds of members of the C.N.T. were arrested, and when our delegation saw Largo Caballero, he reported that many of his followers in the U.G.T. had been victimized in a similar way. I also learned that when Socialists from abroad were arrested a member of the Communist Party

of their country was invariably present at the police examination. If the Socialist under examination was known as an opponent of Communist Party policy there was little chance of his remaining outside prison.

But even more remarkable than the methods of the Secret Service Police were the charges brought against the P.O.U.M. leaders. They were not only charged with conspiracy in connection with the May Days' resistance in Barcelona. Despite their heroic record of struggle against the Fascists from July 19th onwards, they were charged with being guilty of espionage on behalf of Franco and the Fascists !

It is important to emphasize that these charges, and the evidence on which they were based, were the responsibility not of the Government, but of the political police. This was made clear in the telegram which Señor Negrin sent all over the world to working-class organizations which protested against the arrest of the P.O.U.M. leaders. I reproduce it exactly as it was received in America, Palestine, France, Holland, and many parts of Britain—

“In reply to your cable, the Republican Government has no hand in the affair of the P.O.U.M. The measures taken are of a judicial nature arising from legal contravention. We promise you that the accused will be assured the full rights of the usual legal procedure. Greetings, Vasquez, Secretariat of the Presidium of the Republic.”

Note—“the Republican Government has no hand in the affair of the P.O.U.M.” When our delegation met Ministers in Valencia, they made it perfectly clear that the charges were brought by the police. There can be no doubt that the Communist Party which controlled the police was responsible.

At the time of writing this chapter, the evidence against the P.O.U.M. leaders, other than Andres Nin, had not been

published.¹ In his case the police announced shortly after his arrest that they had found a secret communication to General Franco which implicated him. This message was alleged to have been discovered in the Chilean Embassy. It was stated to consist of a miniature map of Madrid marked with military information, with a coded message on the back, written in invisible ink, in which a reference was made to "the directing member of P.O.U.M., N". "N," according to this message, was a Franco spy.

This letter, with the comment that "N" obviously meant Nin, was published in Communist newspapers all over the world, and was also distributed to other papers by the Spanish Press Agency, a Communist-controlled semi-official press service. But this strange fact was noted by those who had an eye for such details—none of the Spanish correspondents of the ordinary press or of the unofficial agencies sent out this news.

When I visited Valencia I learned the explanation from journalists there. They had been handed the "N" letter (as it came to be known) by an official of the Government Press department—a Communist—with the remark that he would like it to be published, but that it was not issued by the Government. Thereupon, all the journalists except the Communists declined to handle it; they refused to become a party to what was clearly an intrigue. They knew Nin's record, and took the view that if the Govern-

¹ As I pass the proofs of this book for the Press, news comes of the charges against the other P.O.U.M. leaders. Documents are supposed to have been found in secret P.O.U.M. premises in Barcelona involving the leaders and the organization in a vast Fascist conspiracy, including both military and economic sabotage. Who can be sufficiently credulous to believe in the genuineness of these documents? If the P.O.U.M. leaders were really guilty, the documents would have been destroyed by their associates as soon as they were arrested. *Still later*—News came at the end of November that a majority of the Spanish Government had decided that there was no case to justify the trial of the P.O.U.M. leaders.

ment's Press Department was to be the medium of distributing such grave charges against him, the Government should take responsibility for them. In passing, may I pay a word of tribute to these newspaper men? The "N letter" would have made a sensational story, yet they refrained from using it because of their sense of decency and justice.

I doubt whether there was any responsible person in Spain who believed in the bona fides of the "N letter". I did not meet anyone outside the membership of the Communist Party who did so. Despite the opposition of the Catalonian Government to the P.O.U.M., President Companys and all its non-Communist members—Liberal, C.N.T., and U.G.T.—protested to the Central Government against the arrests of the P.O.U.M. leaders, and ridiculed the suggestion that Andres Nin could have been a Fascist spy. Even the members of the Central Government stressed to our delegation that it must not be assumed that the "N" of the letter referred to Nin. The fact that the letter, whilst being issued to other countries, was never published in Spain, indicates that the Communists themselves realized that it would not carry conviction to the Spanish people.

Then came the "disappearance" of Andres Nin. I have referred to the fact that when we arrived at Valencia the Minister of the Interior hurried off to Madrid to locate the arrested P.O.U.M. leaders. Through the Minister of Justice he gave our delegation an assurance that they would be removed from Madrid, where Communist control was unchecked, to Valencia, where at least they would be under the eyes of the Government.

The prisoners other than Nin were transferred. Where was Nin? I was back in London by this time; a confidential report reached me via Paris that the P.O.U.M. leader had been assassinated. I telegraphed the Minister of Justice

in the name of the National Council of the I.L.P., recalling his promise, and asking where Nin was. The answer came that he had "disappeared", and that the judicial police had been given the duty of finding him. That is two months from the time of writing. He would be an optimistic man who would now say that Nin has not been assassinated. A report received from Spain states that he was put in a car with the ostensible purpose of transferring him to Valencia. A guard of C.N.T. members was permitted to accompany him in the car as a guarantee of good faith ; secret service police cars preceded and followed him. At a selected spot Nin's car was machine-gunned, and all its occupants killed. The bodies of C.N.T. members on the roadside by the side of Nin's is advanced as proof that he was attempting to escape.

That is the story as conveyed to me from an ex-member of the Central Government. Whether it is true in detail or not, I fear that there is little reason to hope that Nin is alive. He was kept under the strongest armed guard in Madrid. There was not one chance in a thousand for him to escape.

CHAPTER IX

THE COUNTER-REVOLUTION

IT IS time to pause in this narrative and see where we have got. We noted at the beginning of Chapter VII that the popular Front alliance with the Liberal Capitalists had prevented the working class from taking political power despite the fact that they had won economic power and had become the armed power. We saw in the last chapter how the bourgeois State gradually re-asserted itself over the workers, how it took away their military power and subordinated their economic power. In the last development recorded—the suppression of the Revolutionary Socialist Party, the P.O.U.M. and the imprisonment of its leaders—we see the circle completed. The bourgeois State has become openly the instrument of the counter-revolution.

It will be necessary to make some remarks about the part which the Communist Party took in this process, but before doing so, the political inevitability of what has happened in Spain must be stressed. Once the initial mistake was made of an alliance with sections of the Capitalist class for the defence of bourgeois democracy instead of an alliance of the working class for the maintenance and development of the social revolution, the tragic end to which every development moved was bound to come. It was Germany at the end of the war over again.

The German Social Democrats then united with the Liberal Capitalist Parties to defend bourgeois democracy. Inevitably they came into conflict with the militant working

class (led then, ironically enough in the light of Spanish events, by the Communist Party), who were not satisfied with a political revolution which left them in economic subjection. Having started out on this course, nothing could stop the fatal march of events to the assassination of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg. The Communists threatened the bourgeois State; they must be crushed. We condemn Noske and Scheidemann as Social-Democratic butchers, but more important than emotional anger against them is an understanding of the political betrayal which led up to their crime. That political betrayal was the sacrifice of the class fight and the social revolution for class collaboration in defence of the Capitalist democratic State.

The same betrayal has brought about the same conclusion in Spain. The Social Democrats and Communists have sacrificed the social revolution for the Capitalist democratic State. The P.O.U.M. stood for the social revolution; it must be crushed. Andres Nin is their Karl Liebknecht.

But it is necessary to do more than to point out the underlying political betrayal. It is necessary to expose the methods by which it was carried through. Looking back one can see quite clearly the tactics which the Communist International and the Communist Party pursued from the beginning to bring about the destruction of the P.O.U.M.

First, let us be clear about the ethics of this matter. The Capitalist system is the embodiment of injustice, lies, dishonesty, fraud, robbery, mutilation and murder. Recognizing this, the Communist philosophy and practice say that there can be no obligation upon revolutionaries to pay regard to the canons of truth or honour or humanitarianism in the fight against the Capitalist class. It is a class war and must be fought ruthlessly. The end justifies every

means. If class enemies are in your hands and their destruction is necessary for the social revolution, don't have any compunction about how you destroy them. Lie, commit fraud, execute—get rid of them somehow.

Something else follows. Certain sections of the working class are enemies of Communist Party policy. If they get their way, Communist intentions cannot be realized. It is true they say that they want the social revolution, but for reasons of Russia's foreign policy the social revolution has become inconvenient. Therefore these sections of the working class are enemies of Soviet Russia, the Workers' Fatherland. They are as much the enemy as the Capitalist class. They are more the enemy, because, according to the Communist view, they are playing the game of the Capitalist class within the working class. They must be destroyed, and the means to destroy them must be equally ruthless as those used against the Capitalist class.

You see how easy it is on this argument to justify the resort to lies, fraud, and assassination against even other sections of the working class which pursue a line of policy which you regard as a betrayal.

It is in this light that we must review the attitude and actions of the Communist International and its sections towards the P.O.U.M. On a hundred occasions they have denounced the P.O.U.M. as the instrument of the Fascists. Therefore we can begin with the assumption that the Communist International and its parties would not hesitate to resort to any and every means to destroy the P.O.U.M.

Reviewing what has happened one can see three stages in the attack. The first was the barrage of absolutely unsupported slanders which was flung out last November. In Spain itself and all over the world the Communist Parties suddenly began to denounce the P.O.U.M. as Fascist spies and agents, as Franco's "Fifth Column", as assassins,

as traitors on the field of battle, as agents-provocateurs. I repeat that not an iota of evidence was produced to support these charges, but they had a certain effect in poisoning working-class psychology towards the P.O.U.M.

I now regard as very significant an incident which occurred about this time at the negotiations which preceded the Unity Campaign of the Socialist League, the I.L.P. and the Communist Party. I drew attention to the Communist International charges against the P.O.U.M., gave the warning that the I.L.P. would be compelled to reply, and pointed out how serious would be the effect of this controversy on the cause of unity in Britain. I cited the charges against the P.O.U.M., and asked Harry Pollitt to justify any one of them in a single respect. He did not even attempt to do so. "You wait," he said. "You will see later on whether the charges are justified."

It is my conviction that it was not possible to provide evidence to support the charges made last November because the evidence had not then been manufactured. The moment for staging the frame-up had not yet come.

The November barrage created the preliminary psychology. The second stage was to destroy the political influence of the P.O.U.M. Thanks to the prestige brought to the Spanish Communist Party by the coming of Russian arms and the International Brigade, and the power which these gave to its demands, this was not difficult. The P.O.U.M. was turned out of the Government and it was driven into isolation.

Then came the third and final stage. The Communist Party had gained the necessary influence to obtain control of the instrument of State suppression—the police and especially the Secret Service police, the political arm of the force. The identification of the P.O.U.M. with the May Days' resistance in Barcelona provided the excuse to

use this instrument. The P.O.U.M. was suppressed and its leaders were arrested.

The Barcelona resistance also gave the Communist Party the opportunity to formulate the charges and to create the evidence. The accusations of November were renewed, and the "N letter" was "discovered": it was a perfect espionage document—military map, invisible ink, code, references to Nin by initial. *The only difficulty was that no one believed it.* Even Ministers were sceptical, and the Commissioner of Police in Madrid, S. Vazquez (a non-Communist), stated publicly that documents supposed to have been found in Nin's cell belonged to Police Department files and must have been transferred to the cells by the police themselves! The Liberal Minister of Justice ordered that Nin and the P.O.U.M. prisoners should be removed from the hands of the Communist prison officials at Madrid to the control of the authorities at Valencia. At that moment Nin "disappeared".

It is evident that Communist Party technique was this—first to poison the mind of the working class against the P.O.U.M. by unsupported charges, and then, when the opportunity to strike came, to frame-up evidence to fit the charges. It was Machiavellian in its ingenuity. It enabled the Communist Party both to destroy its opponents and to justify its insight from the beginning!

We are examining the Popular Front in practice. To what extent is the Spanish Popular Front responsible for this Communist Party conspiracy against the P.O.U.M.?

I do not charge the Spanish Liberal or Socialist Parties with responsibility for the plot, but the P.O.U.M. was in fact suppressed because it opposed the political line of the Popular Front, because it stood for the social revolution. Neither the Liberal Party nor the Social Democrats wanted the social revolution; both regarded the P.O.U.M. as an

enemy ; both acquiesced in what the Communist Party did with only feeble administrative protests on matters of detail ; neither can escape its responsibility for membership of the Government under which the Communist Party carried through its plot. There was a Socialist Prime Minister, a Liberal Minister of Justice. The fundamental fact is that the P.O.U.M. was suppressed by a Popular Front Government because it opposed the Popular Front objective of bourgeois democracy and maintained the class struggle for Socialism.

But it must not be assumed that the suppression of the P.O.U.M. is permanent or that the social revolution is dead. In actual fact, the P.O.U.M. is carrying on in Spain. Within three weeks of the occupation of its buildings by the Government forces and the arrest of its leaders, I met its new National Council in Barcelona and its Executive Committee in Valencia. I saw its leaflets, eighty thousand of which were being distributed every three days. In twenty towns and villages I saw its slogans chalked up prominently on walls. New local officials had been appointed as well as national officials, and there was plenty of evidence that the work of the Party was being maintained. Its two daily newspapers are being secretly printed and distributed.

But of greater significance was the development in the mass working-class movement. I have described how both the national Trade Union organizations—the Syndicalist C.N.T. and the Socialist U.G.T.—were driven from the Central Government. In Catalonia also the C.N.T. was manœuvred out of the Government by the Communist Party. This meant that throughout Spain the organized industrial movement of the working class had regained liberty of action. It was no longer bound within the limits of an alliance with the Liberal Capitalist Parties.

Both sections of the Trade Union Movement continued

to give wholehearted support to the war against the Fascists. Their members formed the majority of the soldiers at the front; they co-operated with the Government in the extension and speeding up of arms production; they carried on a platform, press and poster campaign to maintain concentration upon the defeat of General Franco. But they functioned once more as an independent instrument for the defence of working-class rights and liberties. The Syndicalist C.N.T. openly championed the right of the P.O.U.M. to justice and endorsed its objective of the social revolution. Largo Caballero, the leader of the U.G.T., could not speak so completely for his organization because two-fifths of its membership was under the influence of the Communists and Right Socialists. But he also protested against the persecution of the P.O.U.M. and the reactionary trend of the Government in relation to the working class. In particular, he protested against the disarming of the workers.

A movement began to bring about the unification of the Syndicalist C.N.T. and the Socialist U.G.T. A common programme of action was adopted. The Communists feared this development, because in the united Trade Union organization the revolutionary section would have a majority. The C.N.T. with its two million members is mainly revolutionary, whilst in the U.G.T. nine hundred thousand of its million and a half members are followers of Largo Caballero, and are reverting to the revolutionary attitude which they held before the Popular Front was instituted. They are certainly in revolt against the leadership of the Communists and Social Democrats.¹

¹ The conflict between the Reformist and Revolutionary sections of the U.G.T. has since led to the splitting of the organization. The Executive expelled the Communist sections. The National Council restored them and expelled Caballero. It is now uncertain how far Caballero can maintain his followers as an organized force.

To counter this move the Communists are advocating the unity of the Socialist and Communist Parties. As already recorded, this has been carried through in Catalonia, where the Communists have succeeded in taking the united party into their International. The same thing may possibly happen in Spain nationally, though it is doubtful whether Right Socialists like Prieto are yet prepared to walk into the Communist International, whilst in important sections of the Socialist Party—as for example, Valencia, where Caballero's influence is great—there is strong opposition to subjection to the Communists.

There are other signs that disquietude about Communist Party domination is growing. The protests received from all parts of the world against the suppression of the P.O.U.M. made an impression upon the Liberals and Social Democrats in the Government. By August eighty of the P.O.U.M. members, including some of its Executive Council, had been released, and foreign Socialist supporters were being released and sent across the frontier. When Mr. James Maxton, M.P., went to Valencia in that month on behalf of the I.L.P. he was permitted to see the P.O.U.M. prisoners, and he reported that their prison conditions were not harsh. Although they were to be tried before the Special Tribunal for espionage, their participation in the Barcelona "Resistance" rather than espionage was evidently regarded as their main offence. The Communists not unnaturally became uneasy about developments. In Moscow the complaint was made that the P.O.U.M. leaders were being treated too lightly in prison, and the Communist press both in Spain and other countries made demands for sterner suppression of its opponents.¹

¹ This was followed by the new charges of espionage against the P.O.U.M. leaders as recorded in the footnote on page 126.

I recognize that the protests made against the persecution of the P.O.U.M. were often voiced by those who were nevertheless critical of its policy. Their main criticism was that those who stood for the social revolution had divided the anti-Fascist forces, and so assisted General Franco. The argument was: Let us defeat the Fascists first and consider the social revolution after that has been done.

Those who have followed closely the developing situation as described in this book will realize that it is the Communist Party which has been responsible for the division of the anti-Fascist forces in Spain. There was unity in October. All sections of the anti-Fascist front were in the Government; in Catalonia the P.O.U.M. was in the Government with the Socialists, Syndicalists, Communists and Liberals. It was the slanderous attacks on the P.O.U.M. by the Communist Party which began the division among the anti-Fascist forces.

It was the Communist Party which alone refused to sign the pact between the anti-Fascist parties for a suspension of attacks upon each other. It was the Communist Party which broke the united anti-Fascist Government in Catalonia by insisting upon the withdrawal of the P.O.U.M. It was the Communist Party which broke up the united Central Government by overthrowing Largo Caballero and bringing about the withdrawal of the two mass Trade Union Organizations—the Syndicalist C.N.T. and the Socialist U.G.T. It was the Communist Party which destroyed the representative character of the Catalan Government by bringing about the withdrawal of the C.N.T., overwhelmingly the strongest Catalan working-class organization. It was the Communist Party which subsequently split disastrously the U.G.T. by its intrigues against Caballero.

These were the effects of Communist Party policy on

the united front of the anti-Fascist forces in the governments. Far more serious were the effects among the masses of the working class.

In the autumn of 1936 there was working-class unity. In Madrid, Valencia, Catalonia, the workers had defeated the Fascists, created a workers' army, taken possession of the factories and land. The Liberals were compelled to recognize the reality of the social revolution. This was notably expressed by President Companys in his interview with Mr. Langdon-Davies as published in his book, *Behind the Spanish Barricades*.

Then, behind the leadership of the Communist International, the Parties of the Popular Front began to sound the retreat from the social revolution. The restoration of the bourgeois Republic, not the completion of the social revolution, became the object of the fight against Fascism. The offensive began against workers' power and workers' rights. The workers' army and police were destroyed, the workers were disarmed, their collectivization was sabotaged. Resentment and then resistance grew. This was the explanation of the Barcelona May Days. No one is going to pretend that that mass resistance was merely the result of the subversive machinations of the P.O.U.M. It obviously had a deep and wide basis among the workers themselves.

When the P.O.U.M. was suppressed and the C.N.T. cowed, the Spanish Government openly announced the throwing over of the social revolution. Senor Negrin, the Premier, made a statement to reassure British and French Governments and the Capitalists who owned property in Spain :—

“ We have always respected the rights of private property. Any excesses that were committed at the beginning of the revolution were the acts of disorderly individuals committed

in spite of our regulations, but that brief period of confusion is long over.

"Our constitution expresses our full respect for private property, and you may be certain we shall continue fully to respect these constitutional rights."—(*Daily Telegraph*, 6.9.37)

The Spanish Government gave practical form to these words by issuing decrees that the only property to be confiscated is that which was owned by individuals who had actually joined Franco's fighting forces. In all other cases, property is to be restored to the owners or they are to be fully compensated. *This is the legal end of the social revolution. It is the official decree of the counter revolution.*

The Communists often justify their policy in Spain by saying that it was necessary to win the war. In fact, it is the Communist Party which has been responsible for undermining the initial enthusiasm for the war against Franco. Go back to those early days—the workers had no sooner defeated the Fascists in the cities than they formed their Workers' Militia and poured forth across the countryside and mountains to do battle with the Fascist forces. They went forth with obsolete weapons, sticks, bare fists. Their enthusiasm rose with the coming of Russian arms and the International Brigade. They did marvellous deeds of heroism in holding back the Fascist hosts at Madrid. But why was there no advance on the Aragon front? That would relieve Madrid; prevent any advance in the Basque Province. It was clearly the key to the whole military strategy. An advance on the Aragon front would have altered the whole face of the war.¹

¹ Recent events suggest that the failure to arm and advance on the Aragon Front may have imperilled the whole military struggle in Spain. So far from Communist policy having served to win the war it may prove to have lost the war.

When the workers found that the arms necessary for an advance on the Aragon front were not forthcoming for political reasons—because the Workers' Militia there belonged to the C.N.T. and the P.O.U.M. and was revolutionary in character—disappointment and disillusionment began to set in. When they experienced the attacks on the power and rights which they had won behind the lines, the disillusionment grew. The spirit of the fight, if it did not go out, fell by many degrees. For workers' power, for the control which they had won in factory and workshop, for the possession of the land, for the new freedom and equality which they had gained, they were prepared to fight to the death. But for the old bourgeois State? Yes, they would fight against the Fascists, but it was with a negative desperation instead of the positive enthusiasm which had burned before.

There is one consideration in this respect which has been overlooked. In a war between nations, national patriotism is an effective dynamic. But in a civil war class patriotism can be the only sustained dynamic; a civil war assumes a conflict between two sections of the community. Within a community it is the class struggle, the defence of profit and privilege on the one side and the demand for bread and land and social justice and freedom on the other, which is the dividing reality. Express that on either side and you will get the sustained passion which war requires. Suppress it on either side and it will be difficult to prevent war-weariness and the growth of indifference.

The present danger of war-weariness on the Government side in Spain arises from the fact that the dynamic of the social revolution has been suppressed. Experience has shown that the war and social revolution are inseparable not only from the point of view of Marxist theory but from the point of view of practical reality and success.

It is true that the situation in Spain has been complicated by the foreign invasion, the importation of the Moorish legionaries and the Italian and German troops. The Communists have endeavoured to arouse national patriotism against this by calling the struggle a war of national independence. But instinctively the workers and peasants of Spain have known that it is more than that, that it is the continuation of the struggle against their own ruling class which had its first success in the abdication of Alfonso in 1931. They have seen the Moors and the Italians and Germans met by the comrades of the International Brigade and Russian assistance. They have realized that the war in Spain is from its very nature a class fight, and that the presence of foreign troops represents not so much a war of Spain against other nations as an international war on Spanish territory against Fascism, the final bulwark of Capitalism. If Fascism is separated from Capitalism, if against it is put not Workers' Power and Socialism, but democracy within a continued Capitalism, then the real fight has gone out of the conflict. If the struggle for the social revolution is separated from the struggle against Fascism, the driving conquering power of the workers and peasants is lost.

There is this additional consideration. If the social revolution is to take place after the Fascists are defeated, the forces to carry out the social revolution must be prepared and stimulated to seize the opportunity when it arrives. The social revolution will not drop out of the sky. It certainly won't come at all if during the struggle against Fascism the power and rights which the workers have already won are surrendered, and if the very parties which have been regarded as the instrument of the social revolution take the initiative in sabotaging socialization and in defending the rights of property. Such activity destroys the capacity of

a Party to make the revolution. It attracts to it a membership which will resist rather than realize the revolution.

This point has been made by Mr. H. N. Brailsford who, I would remind the reader, is an opponent of the policy of social revolution in Spain and a supporter of the policy of the Communist Party. This is an extract from his article in the *The New Statesman and Nation* (22/5/37) on his return from Spain—

“ Will not the Communist Party, with or without its Socialist allies, revert to its revolutionary policy when victory is won ? That is, one supposes, the reckoning on which the British Government bases its hostility to the Republic. I think this development must be permanent. This prediction I base on the social composition of the Communist Party both in Catalonia (where it is fused with Socialists) and in Spain . . . it is no longer primarily a party of the industrial workers or even a Marxist Party.

“ One of its leading men was describing to me its admirable work in setting up reading-rooms, clubs and political schools for the army. ‘ What do you teach ? ’ I asked. ‘ The fundamentals of Marxism ? ’ ‘ Well, now, ’ he answered, ‘ the instruction is all on People’s Front lines.’

“ Again in Catalonia a leading Communist was explaining the rapid growth of the U.G.T. (the Socialist Trade Union of which the Communists have gained leadership in Catalonia—F.B.)

“ ‘ Much of the new membership, ’ he said, ‘ has come from the ranks of the Esquerra (Left Middle-class Republicans). The small middle class realizes that of the two parties ours is the stouter defender of small property.’

“ That claim was true ! In next day’s newspaper I read a report of a gathering of retail tradesmen in Barcelona. It was the U.G.T. which saved them from the plans of socialization backed by the Anarchist C.N.T.”

The same point about the bourgeois composition of the Communist Party in Spain is made by Franz Borkenau

in his *The Spanish Cockpit*, probably the most objective and impartial study of the struggle in Spain yet published. In Catalonia the majority of Communist Party members, he writes, are "State and private employees, shopkeepers, merchants, officers, members of the police forces, intellectuals both in town and country, and a certain number of peasants." In the rest of Spain the percentage of workers is larger, but not very high. He sums up in these words :

"The Communist Party, to a large extent, is to-day the party of the military and administrative personnel, in the second place the party of the petty bourgeoisie and certain well-to-do peasant groups, in the third place the party of the employees, and only in the fourth place the party of the industrial workers."

Defenders of Communist Party policy in Spain may say "social revolution when the Fascists are defeated," but the membership of the Spanish Communist Party certainly won't say it. Nor will the Communist International say it. So long as the aim of Soviet Russia in its foreign policy is to win Britain as an ally against Germany, the Communist International will impede rather than speed the social revolution.

Why does Mr. Brailsford, the sincerity of whose Socialism no one will dispute, support Communist Party policy in Spain when he sees so clearly that it will not lead to Socialism even after the defeat of General Franco? His argument is that the democratic Capitalist Governments of Europe, no less than the Fascist Governments, would actively intervene against the Spanish workers if they made the social revolution their objective. To prevent Britain and presumably France (despite its Popular Front Government?) allying themselves with the Fascists, the Spanish workers and peasants must satisfy themselves

with fighting for the restoration of bourgeois democracy only.

One's first comment on this argument is that it rules out social revolution in any country. Over all hangs the danger of foreign Capitalist intervention. If this fear had deterred the Bolsheviks, there would never have been a social revolution in Russia. Indeed, one remembers that the faint hearts sought to deter Lenin from his revolutionary determination by this very fear, and that Lenin brushed it impatiently aside.

One's second comment is that the British National Government, and still more the Popular Front Government of France, would have hesitated seriously before intervening actively against a social revolution in opposition to Fascism because they would have seen that there was no surer way of precipitating a revolutionary situation throughout Europe. Do not let us overlook this fact. If we fear Capitalist intervention against social revolution, the Capitalist class fears still more the menace to them of social revolution. And such a menace would have been real if European Capitalist Governments had united to intervene on the side of the Fascists against the Spanish workers and peasants.

Does Mr. Brailsford honestly believe that the French Popular Front Government, with a Socialist Prime Minister and with the Socialist Party its dominant partner, would have gone to the active aid of the Spanish Fascists? Perhaps he visualizes the French Capitalist Parties uniting against the Socialists and Communists in such circumstances and defeating the Government. Even so, the French Capitalists would hesitate. They would know that active aid to the Spanish Fascists would mean civil war in France. The Pyrenees would cease to be a frontier. Over Spain and France there would be open class war,

unifying the Capitalist class and the working class of both countries in a conflict which would override national unity. Let that begin in Spain and France, and it would sweep over Europe.

Or let us take the effect of intervention by the National Government in Britain. I know it is popular to decry the class feeling of British workers, let alone their revolutionary feeling. Defeatism has dominated the British working-class movement since the industrial humiliation of 1926 was followed by the political humiliation of 1931. It has become the accepted habit to sneer at the possibility of the British workers rising to any demand for bold action.

I do not accept this estimate of the British working class. I remember 1920, when the British workers showed unmistakably through their united and spontaneous preparation for resistance, that they would not have war against Soviet Russia. I remember 1926 and I remember with inspiration, despite the defeat of the national strike, because I know it was not the workers who failed, but their leaders. I remember more recently February, 1935, when the mass action of the British workers compelled the National Government to withdraw its new Unemployment Regulations. The spirit of class action still lives among the British workers. It has been subdued by dispiriting leadership ; but on critical occasions it still rises, overwhelmingly and magnificently.

I believe it would have risen in that way if the National Government had dared to use its Navy and Army in active hostility to the Spanish workers and peasants. Do the most incurable pessimists in our midst really believe that if British warships had bombarded Barcelona and Valencia because its workers had proclaimed the social revolution, the British working class would have quietly acquiesced and taken no action to express their protest? The

opposition would have gone far beyond the working class ; it would have brought in those other sections which have, for instance, always opposed intervention against the social revolution in Soviet Russia. The resistance of the working class might easily have flared up into forms which would have made the Government pause. The class struggle would have become nakedly apparent in Britain as well.

Indeed, one of our chief criticisms of the " bourgeois democracy " line in Spain has been that it has surrendered the main ground on which the enthusiastic support of the workers of other countries, including Britain, could have been aroused. A fight against Fascism—yes, that arouses support. A fight for democracy within Capitalism—yes, that is better than Fascism, it shall have support. But genuine, deep, all-sweeping enthusiasm—that only comes when the workers feel the appeal of the class fight, the possession of the factories by the workers, of the land by the peasants—that is something to give for and die for, something to inspire action and unity and rare resolve.

This will be dismissed by the scepticism which has eaten deeply in retreat and rout in the British Working-class Movement ; but this remains for consideration even by the sceptics. Is the note of challenge never again to be sounded ? Are we always to refrain, and to encourage others to refrain, because we have no faith in ourselves and our fellow workers ? Is not our task to stimulate British workers to action rather than to deter Spanish workers from action ? Capitalism will never die if we not only hesitate to strike ourselves, but hold back the hand of our fellow-workers in other countries who are ready to strike.

The fate of Spain remains uncertain, but of all the results of the war the restoration of bourgeois democracy, as visualized by the Popular Front, is the most unlikely.

If there is a Fascist victory, the Popular Front parties will have contributed largely towards it by divorcing the dynamic of the social revolution from the war against Fascism, and by refraining from arming and advancing on the Aragon Front, a military tactic which would have saved the Basque country and the Asturias, relieved Madrid, and brought near the victorious end of the war. With a Franco victory a Fascist military dictatorship will come. But even with a victory for the Spanish Government there is little likelihood of an early restoration of Parliamentary democracy. The chaos in Spain, the continuance of Fascist resentful opposition and sabotage, the assertion of national claims by the Basques and Catalans, the revolutionary discontent of the returning soldiers and militant sections of the working class—all these factors will encourage a dictatorship rather than a democracy. In the absence of a social revolution, it will be a Capitalist dictatorship, and in essence a Capitalist dictatorship, whatever it is called, is Fascism. It will be a tragedy if all the sacrifice and heroism of the Spanish workers ends thus.

More likely than either Fascist or Government victory is a compromise by mediation. That would involve a settlement imposed from outside Spain by an agreement between Italy and Germany, on the one side, and Britain, France and perhaps Russia, on the other. These three Powers would require to be satisfied that Italy and Germany did not obtain control of the Western Mediterranean, and in return Italy and Germany would demand concessions—perhaps recognition of Italian sovereignty in Abyssinia, perhaps economic concessions to Germany in Spain itself.

As the days pass, mediation on some such lines seems more and more probable. Any international settlement of the Spanish conflict would of course be on the basis of no revolution. Indeed, it would probably make arrangements

for intervention should the danger of social revolution threaten.¹

This is not an encouraging prospect; but one remembers the thousands of magnificent revolutionaries in Spain, in the factories, on the land, at the front; one finds it difficult to believe that they will be prepared to surrender altogether the freedom and the power which have been won; one looks forward with absolute confidence to the coming of the day when the Spanish workers and peasants will rise in unity and strength, and, learning from the mistakes of this tragic period, will be satisfied with nothing less than the social justice, equality and freedom which only the overthrow of Capitalism can bring.

¹ On the night that these proofs were corrected the B.B.C. News Bulletin reported persistent rumours that a "more moderate" Government was to be formed in Republican Spain to arrange an amnesty and that the International Commission for the withdrawal of volunteers would be the instrument of mediation. These rumours will no doubt be denied officially, but it is known that there are elements in the Government favourable to an armistice.

CHAPTER X

THE POPULAR FRONT IN FRANCE

THE Popular Front in Spain has been described and discussed in some detail because there it has been put to the greatest test, but of almost equal significance is the experience of France. Let us look at the essentials.

The Fascist danger in France reached a peak on February 6, 1934, when, following the revelations which accompanied the Stavisky scandals, a vast anti-Parliamentary demonstration was held in Paris. The threat of a Fascist coup was met by a general strike called by the "reformist" Trade Union Federation (the C.G.T.). The Communist-controlled Trade Union organizations (the C.G.T.U.) did not at first propose to participate in the strike, but came in at the last moment.

Nor did the French Communist Party at first co-operate with the Committees of Vigilance which were formed following the general strike. These sprang up spontaneously over a greater part of France. They were alliances of working-class organizations for the purpose of resisting Fascism, not unlike the Workers' Alliances in Spain from which, it will be remembered, the Communists also abstained at first.

During the summer of 1934, however, in the month of July, the French Communists decided to join the Committees of Vigilance. The policy of this anti-Fascist front was militant. It had a Socialist programme, and it moved steadily towards a revolutionary position.

At that time the Radical-Socialist (that is, Liberal) Party was discredited, largely owing to the fact that some of its prominent members had been implicated in the Stavisky affair. There was no thought of bringing it into the anti-Fascist front, though certain Radical organizations, like the League for Human Rights, came in.

This was the first stage of the anti-Fascist struggle. It should be noted that the instinctive reaction of the French working class to the Fascist threat was, as in Spain, direct class action and class unity with a revolutionary spirit and a Socialist objective.

The enthusiasm for working-class unity went further. After some difficulties of negotiation, due to the disinclination of the Communist Party to give prominence to fundamental Socialist proposals, a basis of a united front between the Socialist and Communist Parties was reached. This was followed by the even more important decision of the Reformist and Communist Trade Union Federations to unite. This unity led to an enthusiastic Trade Union drive, which greatly increased the membership.

Then came the famous Laval-Stalin declaration. Russia was cementing a military alliance with France—a France, remember, which still had a reactionary and frankly Imperialist Government. Stalin, the head of the Russian State, publicly endorsed French rearmament.

This declaration caused a revolution in French Communist policy. Previously the French Communists, pursuing a class policy, had opposed estimates for the armed forces under any Capitalist Government. But now the position was changed. Soviet Russia was negotiating a military alliance with France; that involved an alliance also with other sections in France, even Capitalist sections, which were favourable to a pact with Russia. From this point the Communist Party dropped the class basis of its

policy and aimed at a Popular Front—that is an alliance with democratic and Capitalist forces which would combine a struggle against Fascism in France with preparations for a conflict with Fascist Germany. Most important in this strategy was the Radical-Socialist Party, which could be expected to rally the middle class. The French Communists therefore deliberately aimed at the rehabilitation of the discredited Radical-Socialists and at the destruction of the anti-Fascist revolutionary front of the working class, which up to this time had been developing so promisingly.

In July, 1935, a "Popular Gathering" was held in Paris. It was the predecessor of the Popular Front. For the first time some of the Radical-Socialist leaders joined the working class in an anti-Fascist demonstration. The Communist Party gave its members instructions specially to cheer the Radical-Socialists, who were impressed by their new popularity.

The Radical-Socialists then formally joined the anti-Fascist Committees, which developed into Popular Front Committees and spread throughout France. Negotiations were also opened between the Executives of the Socialist Party, the Communist Party, and the Radical-Socialist Party for a national alliance against Fascism. When the question of a programme for the Popular Front came to be discussed, the Socialist Party proposed advanced measures, including the nationalization of banking, insurance, and trusts, so that the necessary funds might be forthcoming to finance a bold scheme of social services and public works. This programme was rejected by an alliance of the Communist and Radical-Socialist Parties. Instead, a programme of reforms, carefully avoiding any attack on Capitalism, was adopted. The Communists realized that this was the only way to secure the co-operation of their new Capitalist friends.

Action against the Fascist Leagues was promised, and unemployment insurance, reduced working hours, public works, etc. The reference to the Bank of France was indefinite—it would be made “a real Bank of France”. Taxation would be raised from big fortunes. Peace would be defended through the League of Nations. On the subject of Imperialism a Committee of Enquiry into the administration of the colonies was promised.

This was the programme, but in actual fact the programme was not known among the mass of the workers, and counted for nothing, less even than in Spain. In Spain two items aroused mass enthusiasm—the liberation of the prisoners and the freeing of the land for the peasants. In France there were no specific items in the programme which called forth mass support. The basis of the Popular Front was enthusiasm for unity against Fascism, with a vague demand for action to destroy the power of the “two hundred families”, the financial core of the Bank of France. The tactic was to unite the middle class and the peasants with the working class against the big monopolists and financiers.

The Popular Front came to be regarded as having an almost mythical and magical power. It swept the country. When the General Election of June, 1936, came, the Socialist Party was returned as the largest Party, and the Communist Party doubled its vote. On the election platforms the Communists were among the most moderate of the candidates; it was difficult to tell the difference between them and the Radical-Socialists.

The election victory created the same sense of elation and strength among the French workers as it had done amongst the Spanish workers. In Spain the workers stormed the prisons and the peasants took the land. In France their new sense of power led the workers immediately

and generally to demand big improvements in conditions from their employers.

There have been few occurrences in working-class history more remarkable than the stay-in strike movement which swept practically every worker within its scope in and about Paris, and which spread to many other French towns as well. Thousands of workers unattached to any Trade Union joined in; the Paris midinette and bank clerk and factory hand and engineer were all together. They demanded an increase of wages, the forty-hour working week, holidays with pay, the right to negotiate through shop-stewards. They announced that they would remain in the factories, shops, offices, and work-shops until their demands were granted. In effect, they took possession of industry.

A united working-class leadership with revolutionary intentions could have led the French workers very far at this point. A wonderful demonstration of class solidarity and power had been given; the workers were in possession of industry and the employing class were helpless. The employers could not even rely on the State Police Force or army to turn the workers off their property, because the election had placed the Socialist Party in a position of political domination. In such a situation bold direction given jointly by the Socialist, Communist and Trade Union leaders—by Leon Blum, Cachin, and Jouhaux—might have carried through revolutionary changes. All the possibilities were there.

But the Popular Front alliance with the Capitalist Radical-Socialists tied the hands of the working-class leaders. There had previously been a warning of the crippling effect of this alliance in a strike situation. The workers had come out in several towns in the north. They were in a militant mood. The Radical-Socialists became nervous. To reassure their new allies the Socialist and Communist

leaders, and particularly the Communists, counselled the strikers to be restrained and moderate. This was an early indication of how the price of a Capitalist alliance is the modification of the class struggle.

In the case of the Stay-in Strike Movement, the effect of the alliance was still more decisive. The Capitalist Radical-Socialists were seriously alarmed. It is true that they represented Capitalism in the Provincial centres rather than Paris Capitalism, but the Stay-in strikes were spreading to the Provinces, and there was danger of an all-national class conflict. Leon Blum saved the situation for the Popular Front and his Capitalist allies.

Instead of encouraging the workers to take advantage of their favourable situation to go forward to the social revolution, he counselled them to moderation, to give up the possession of their work-places, to return to work in the normal way. He promised that the Popular Front Government would legalize the forty-hour working week and holidays with pay, and he negotiated with the employers for an increase of wages and for the recognition of shop-stewards. With these agreements in their hands the workers evacuated the work-places and reverted to the status of wage-slaves.

The experience of France strengthens the arguments used in an earlier chapter from the experience of Spain—a Popular Front was a correct temporary tactic for election purposes, it was a wrong tactic as a permanent alliance. Suppose this had been the tactic adopted; *first*, a Workers' Front Alliance between all the working-class forces, Socialist, Communist and Trade Union, with a challenging Socialist programme; *second*, an electoral understanding with the Radical-Socialist Party on certain specific agreed issues, with the arrangement that the Workers' Front Parties should support in the second

ballots Radical-Socialist candidates against the reactionaries in constituencies where the Radical-Socialists were above the Workers' Front candidates in the first ballot—and vice versa; *third*, that this arrangement should be made for the common object of defeating the reactionaries and overcoming the Fascist menace and in the interests of the parties concerned, but that the parties to it should have freedom to review the situation after the election, and would not be committed to a long-term alliance limiting their liberty of action on issues where they differed.

There is no doubt that the Radical-Socialists would have accepted such a proposal. They would have seen the danger of being crushed between the Workers' Front on the one side and the reactionary front. They would have welcomed the prospect of strengthening their party by securing the Second Ballot support of the Workers' Front.

At the same time this tactic, from the Workers' Front point of view, would have combined the advantages of obtaining a maximum vote against the reactionaries and Fascists without surrendering the right to carry on the class struggle and to seize any opportunity to carry through the social revolution.

Immediately after the election the Workers' Front would have formed a government and would have had control of the army and the police. In this advantageous position they would have been able, in conjunction with the Trade Union leadership, to give a bold leadership to the Stay-in Strike Movement. Instead of urging the evacuation of the work-places by the workers in return for concessions within Capitalism (concessions which, as events afterwards proved, could be rendered nugatory by Capitalism), the Workers' Front, strong both industrially and politically, could have seized the opportunity to secure permanent control over the work-places in the interests of the workers

—in a sentence, could have carried through the essential change of the social revolution.

A revolutionary struggle would, of course, have followed, but it would be difficult to imagine circumstances more propitious for it. The workers would have begun with control both of the State and of industry. The reactionaries and Fascists would have resisted, a section of the army might have gone over to them, the Radical-Socialists would have dithered in uncertainty and division, its Capitalist elements joining the reactionaries, a large part of its middle class, responding to decisive leadership, siding with the workers. One does not close one's eyes to the probability of German intervention, but that immediately would have rallied the overwhelming mass of French people to the side of the Workers' Government. The weight of the forces would have been on the side of the workers, and this might have been decisive not only for the revolution in France, but throughout Europe. The whole history of these years would have been changed.

That revolutionary leadership was not given because the working-class parties were restricted by the alliance with the Capitalist Radical-Socialist party and by the "within Capitalism" programme of the Popular Front. The whole influence of the working-class leadership was exerted towards quietening down the workers rather than intensifying their class fight. When they had returned to work, Leon Blum, the Socialist Prime Minister, announced that the Government would permit no more Stay-in strikes. The property rights of the employers must be respected and upheld. Leon Blum's Capitalist colleagues in the Government were satisfied.

The Communist Party had declined to enter the Government. It promised support, but desired to keep itself free of direct responsibility for the legislation and administration.

This was obviously a good tactical position, but the Socialists not unnaturally felt some resentment. The Communists were mostly responsible for the Popular Front; the Socialists held that they should share responsibility for its disadvantages as well as its advantages.

Early experience suggested, however, that the Communist Party would use its position of independence to act as a brake rather than as an accelerator. The Socialists urged that the Popular Front programme should be put through quickly and that then more fundamental legislation should be introduced. The Communists would not risk even the future prospect of a breach with the Radical-Socialists. They urged that the items of the Popular Front programme would occupy the time of at least two Parliaments.

When the workers were safely back at their jobs and the first enthusiasm of the Popular Front victory had passed, the employers began their counter-offensive. On an increasingly wide scale they sabotaged the agreements and legislation which had followed the Stay-in strikes. The forty-hour working week was evaded, the full increases of wages were withheld on one excuse or another, the shop-stewards were not recognized. More serious, prices began to mount and wage increases became of less and less value.

Meanwhile, the crisis in Spain broke. This put the Popular Front to a critical test.

The Popular Front Governments of Spain and France were elected on almost exactly the same basis. Both were the outcome of a united front between the working class and Liberal Parties in order to defeat Reaction and Fascism. Both were supported by the same parties and the same sections of society. History does not give another example of two Governments more akin ruling in two adjacent countries. They were brother Governments in every respect.

The Pyrenees served as a frontier between Spain and France, but the two countries were one in political philosophy and spirit.

The only difference was that the Popular Front in Spain had not gone so far leftward as in France. In France the election had resulted in the Socialists being returned as the largest Party, and there was a Socialist Prime Minister of a Socialist-Liberal Coalition Government, supported by the Communist Party. In Spain the Liberals had been returned as the largest Party, and there was an exclusively Liberal Government, with Socialist and Communist support. In both countries the dominant purpose of the Governments was to resist Fascism.

In such circumstances one would expect that if either Government were attacked by their common enemy, Fascism, the other would rally to its support. One would certainly expect that the help normally permitted from one country to another would be forthcoming. Yet, when the Fascist revolt began in Spain, the French Popular Front Government held its hand. It did not even allow the Spanish Government to buy arms from armament makers in France, despite the fact that under Capitalist law and by Capitalist practice this had always been allowed previously. Before this case of Spain I do not know an instance where a *de facto* and *de jure* Government faced with rebellion had been refused permission to purchase arms from another country.

What was the explanation of this surprising boycott of the Spanish Popular Front Government by the French Popular Front Government? How came it about that the Socialist Prime Minister of France, Leon Blum, was the actual promoter of international "non-intervention" in the case of Spain?

The explanation is to be found in two alliances in which

the French Working-class Movement was involved—first, the alliance with the Capitalist Radical-Socialists and, second, the alliance through the Popular Front Government with the National Government of Britain.

The instinctive response of Leon Blum to the Fascist rebellion in Spain was to offer such support as could be given without involving France in actual hostilities. But when the matter was raised in the Government the majority of the Radical-Socialist Ministers, led by M. Daladier, the Minister of War, offered immediate and strenuous opposition. They did so on two grounds: (a) they had seen that the Spanish Government, deserted by its regular Army, had been compelled to distribute arms to the working-class organizations of Spain, and they were reluctant that arms should go from France destined for the Workers' Militia, a potential instrument of revolution, and (b) they feared the international consequences of the provision of help for the Spanish Government—it might involve war with Germany and Italy.

This Radical-Socialist attitude was the first reason why the French Popular Front Government, despite its Socialist Prime Minister, deserted the Spanish Popular Front Government. The Capitalist Radical Socialists threatened to break the Popular Front if the Spanish Government were permitted its legal right to buy arms in France. Because the French working class were allied with a section of the French Capitalists they had to repudiate any alliance with the Spanish workers.

But the French working class were tied not only to a section of the French Capitalists. They were tied through the international alliance of France with Britain to the British Capitalist Government. When the question of allowing the Spanish Government to buy arms in Spain was raised in the French Government, and the Radical-Socialists

pointed out the possible consequence of international war, it was agreed to enquire from London whether, if such consequences occurred, Britain could be counted upon to fulfil its obligations of going to the aid of France. The British Government replied that it did not consider that its international obligations would apply under such circumstances. In other words, if France were attacked by Germany, Britain would not go to the assistance of France.¹

This is another instance of the disastrous results which follow reliance by the working class upon alliances with sections of the Capitalist class or with Capitalist Governments. They will always let down the working class in a critical situation if class interests are involved. The price of the alliance of Leon Blum's Government with Stanley Baldwin's Government was the desertion of the Spanish workers by Leon Blum.

There were times when it appeared as though the French workers would act in their own strength on behalf of their Spanish comrades, despite the attitude of the Government. Two hundred thousand engineers in armament works carried through a one-hour protest strike against the policy of "non-intervention" and offered to work overtime without wages to make arms for the Spanish anti-Fascist forces. Both men and arms got across the French frontier in considerable numbers and quantity in defiance of the ban which the Government imposed.

It is due to the French Communist Party, the Revolutionary Left within the Socialist Party and the French Trade Unions, to record that they demanded that arms should be made available for the Spanish Government, but

¹ I am aware that Mr. Eden, the British Foreign Secretary, denies that this exchange of question and answer took place. I base my statement on the word of a Socialist member of the French Government.

when Leon Blum replied by threatening to summon a meeting of the Chamber of Deputies, where he could have depended upon the support of the Centre and the Right, both the Communist Party and the Trade Union Movement subdued their demand. Jouhaux, the Trade Union secretary, explained that the Unions "had no intention of removing France's foreign policy from the control of Parliament", whilst Maurice Thorez, the Communist leader, promised continued support of the Popular Front Government. Thorez reserved the right to maintain the demand for intervention in Spain, but in fact the campaign was toned down until it ceased to count. The hampering hand of the Capitalist alliance destroyed any and every tendency towards helping the Spanish workers.

The consequences of the desertion of Spain by the French Popular Front Government did not end in France. It had a determining effect on the early attitude of Soviet Russia and of the International Working-class Movement. For the first three critical months of the Spanish civil war the Soviet Government also refused permission to the Spanish Government to buy arms in Russia, and it justified this failure to support the Spanish workers on the ground of its alliance with France.

Moreover, when the supreme working-class authority in Britain, the National Council of Labour (consisting of the Trades Union Congress General Council, the Labour Party Executive, and the Parliamentary Labour Party Executive), met to consider the question of non-intervention in Spain, the main argument of Sir Walter Citrine in urging that the British Labour Movement should refrain from demanding that arms should be permitted to go to the Spanish Government, was that this policy would be a fatal blow to the French Government and would lead to the break-up of the French Popular Front. And the decision of

British Labour was the dominating factor in the conclusion of a similar decision by the international Working-class Movement.

I am not suggesting that Sir Walter Citrine's argument should have carried the day, but the French working class cannot avoid the first responsibility for the betrayal of Spain by the working-class movement of the world. It will be a terrible responsibility to bear in history, and to the French Popular Front and its alliance with the Radical-Socialists the cause of this betrayal must be traced.

Before we return to look at the internal situation in France, attention must be drawn to other effects of the Popular Front alliance in the international sphere.

France is the second Imperialist Power in the world—second only to Britain. Historically, French Socialists and Communists have always championed the rights of the subject peoples in the Empire to self-government, and have identified themselves with the struggles of the African and Arab peoples for political and economic freedom. But when the Socialists and Communists entered into an alliance with the Radical-Socialists a new situation arose. The Radical-Socialists would not countenance the encouragement of revolt within the Empire or the recognition of the claim of the subject peoples to political independence. The furthest the Radical-Socialists would accept was the appointment of a Commission of Enquiry into the Colonial question.

The effect of this change of policy has been dramatically expressed by Mr. George Padmore, the Negro leader, who was for many years the African representative on the Executive of the Communist International. At that time his duties included the encouragement and organization of revolt among the African subjects of the French Empire.

He and his fellow Communists organized centres of revolution in the native armies of the French Government. Those who belonged to these Communist nuclei were prepared and trained to turn against French Imperialism in a war situation. They were taught that the next war would provide the opportunity for the subject peoples of the French Empire to win their political independence.

But when Soviet Russia entered into a military alliance with the French Imperialist Government, when a Popular Front Government with a Socialist Prime Minister and supported by Communists became responsible for the administration of French Imperialism, the situation changed. A revolt within the French Empire was no longer desired. It would be a betrayal of Soviet Russia and the Popular Front. Mr. George Padmore and the Negro Communists were asked to stop their activities against French Imperialism. Instead, they must instil among the African population the need to co-operate with French Imperialism.

One is not surprised that Mr. Padmore declined to change his line. He refused to believe that the interests of the social revolution, in Soviet Russia or anywhere else, would really be served by sacrificing the struggle against Imperialism. He saw that if this policy were pursued the native populations in the French Empire would turn against the workers of France just as the Moors had turned against the Spanish Popular Front Government and the Spanish workers. He saw the struggle against Imperialism and the struggle against Capitalism as indivisible.

Experience justified Mr. Padmore's fears. In November, 1937, the French Popular Front Government had to suppress "with severe measures" (the phrase is that of the Resident General) a revolt by the native people of French Morocco. The payment to the peasants for their produce

had literally reached starvation point, taxation had been increased, the towns were crowded with hungry people endeavouring to live on odd jobs. When riots occurred, the crowds were dispersed by firing, troops occupied the towns, tanks paraded the streets, the leaders were arrested, their organization declared illegal, and the newspaper of the Socialist Party of Morocco was suppressed. Surely this is the most ironical outcome of the coalition of the French Socialist Party with the Liberal Capitalists of France : that it should become responsible for suppressing the organ of a Brother Party in the Empire !

But it was not only in the sphere of Imperialism that the Capitalist alliance of the Popular Front involved a continuation of Capitalist policies. It involved a similar continuation in the whole sphere of foreign policy. We have already seen the disastrous effect of the alliance with the British National Government on the Spanish policy of Leon Blum's administration. The foreign alliances of France with other reactionary Governments were also maintained, including the semi-Fascist Government of Poland.

General Rydz-Smigly, the dictator of Poland, paid a visit to Paris, and to retain his friendship the Popular Front Government voted him a loan of £13,000,000 for rearmament. There are few incidents which illustrate more vividly than this visit the extent to which the Communist Party is prepared to go in betraying the class struggle in order to win Capitalist allies for Soviet Russia. In Poland under General Rydz-Smigly, the Communist Party is illegal and its members are constantly being imprisoned. As this chapter was written, news came from Poland of methods of terror which General Rydz-Smigly was using to suppress a Peasants' Strike, including the shooting down of the peasants. Yet Maurice Thorez, the French Communist

Party Secretary, wrote in this manner to welcome the Polish dictator to Paris—

“Long live Poland! This morning there arrived in Paris General Rydz-Smigly, Marshal of the Polish Army and the most important person of his country. General Rydz-Smigly was the disciple and fighting companion of Marshal Pilsudski, the founder of the now independent Poland, who named his successor. . . . The inner regime of Poland is rather distant from a liberal democracy, and General Rydz-Smigly at one time occupied Kiev and defended Warsaw against the Red Army. Nevertheless, we are not uneasy in addressing our greetings to France’s eminent guest.”

Apparently all things are to be forgiven in a possible potential ally of Russia!

Look for a moment at what our examination of the Popular Front in France has already revealed. The class struggle was deserted. The Spanish workers were deserted. The colonial peoples were deserted. The workers of semi-Fascist Poland were deserted. There would appear to be no end to the desertions which follow from the desertion of the basis of class action. Once enter into an alliance with the Capitalist class and with Capitalist Governments, and all desertions follow.

There was one period during the Popular Front Government when the Communist Party was ready to go still further in its course of surrendering the class struggle for the sake of national unity against Fascist Germany. The Communists were doubtful about the enthusiasm of Leon Blum for the Franco-Soviet Pact, and saw tendencies towards a rapprochement with Germany. They therefore proposed that the Popular Front should be extended into a “French Front” composed of all who were prepared to defend the Republic against Fascist enemies within and without. How far the class struggle was forgotten is shown

in the following quotation from *L'Humanité* (August 23, 1936)—

“ The great idea of a ‘ French Front ’ as proposed by Comrade Thorez in the name of our French Communist Party is going well. In the meantime, all who would like to see our country divided into two camps for civil war, all who want the nation divided so that it may be overcome more easily by attacking foreign Powers, these are the people who oppose the ‘ French Front ’. But for all they do or say, they will not be able to prevent the actual realization of a concept that is unconquerable because it is rooted in the heart and mind of every French citizen who cares about the interests and future of his country. . . .

“ The platform is short and clear: 1. Defence of the national economy; 2. Security and independence of France; 3. Respect for the Republican Law.

“ Who but the declared enemies of our people would refuse to accept these three points ? ”

The Communist proposal for a “ French Front ” did not receive any response from the Capitalist Sections to the Right of the Radical-Socialists to whom it was addressed; but the character of the proposal and the fact that it was made are an indication of how completely the present Communist policy leads to the very “ social-patriotism ” which the Communist International was established in 1917 to combat.

Let us return to the day-to-day struggle of the working class in France. We shall find that the prospect is no more encouraging.

The employers have become confidently and almost impudently aggressive. Increasingly they ignore the Stay-in Strike agreements and the legislative decrees which were supposed to give these agreements statutory authority. Prices continue to mount, and the Government does nothing effective to stop them. The Capitalist elements in the Popular Front Government prevent penalization of

the trusts and monopolies which are the real criminals. It is the little grocer who is made the victim; he is sent to a tribunal and punished for charging too much for pepper.

The Government is up against Big Finance. The Popular Front programme included an item for the taxation of big fortunes; but the Government, no doubt under the influence of its Capitalist participants, forgets this. Instead, the "little people" are asked to contribute to a loan.

The loan does not raise enough to finance the programme of public works and social services which had been promised. The deficit becomes threatening. The Government goes to the banks—the very banks which the Popular Front had denounced. The banks refuse it money.

The Government goes to the City of London. There a loan is arranged—*arranged on condition that the French Government gives no assistance to the Spanish workers.* The French working-class parties are bought off from giving help to their Spanish comrades by British financiers!

Humiliation could not go much deeper, but the end is not yet. Still there is not enough money to pay for the public work schemes to assist the unemployed and for further social reforms. There is no help for it—there must be a "pause" in social reform whilst financial arrangements are made. Once again the Popular Front Government must go to the banks for advice. The Bank of France is supposed to have been nationalized. A Board of Control has been set up on the Public Utility model. But the financiers are still masters.

In desperation Leon Blum introduces a Bill to give the Government dictatorial powers over finance. With difficulty he gets it through the Chamber of Deputies. The Communists threaten to oppose, but in the end the Popular

Front alliance brings them to heel. The Bill goes to the Senate. There it is defeated.

The climax has been reached. For twelve months the employers have been undermining the results of the Stay-in Strike Movement. Now the moment has arrived when the Capitalist class can strike through their control of the Senate. The issue is nakedly revealed. The financiers are determined to end the offensive of the working class.

Even critics of the Popular Front expected some resistance by the French working class to this barefooted sabotage by the Capitalist class. The crisis had come; the test had come. But the policy of compromise had gone too far. There was no fight left in the Popular Front. Leon Blum resigned. A Radical Socialist Prime Minister acceptable to the financiers took his place. The leadership of the Popular Front Government changed. The Capitalist Liberals superseded the Socialists as the directing force.

This was in reality the end of the Popular Front. At the moment of writing the Government still continues. The latest development is the appointment of a Commission to report as to whether the forty-hour working week should continue. The Popular Front Government has reached the concluding stages of the British Labour Government. Its May Economy Commission has been appointed. The results will inevitably be the same. Capitalism must be saved at the expense of the working class.

Fortunately the political forces of Fascism in France are divided and demoralized. They are not in a position to take advantage of this situation. On the other hand, the forces of Capitalism are more strongly organized. They realize as they have not before the character of the struggle ahead. They are mobilizing their resources.

But the same thing is also true of the working class.

Political leadership has failed, yet the spirit of the workers remains alert. Their sense of solidarity is strong; they still vote overwhelmingly for Popular Front candidates. Trade Union membership has enormously increased, and even the leaders are becoming impatient.

It may be that the experiment of the Popular Front was necessary in France. It should have proved to the French workers that there is no hope in a programme "within Capitalism" and that an alliance with sections of the Capitalist class is disastrous. It should have proved to them that a Capitalist and Imperialist State cannot be governed except on Capitalist and Imperialist lines, and that nothing but a fundamental change, requiring a social revolution, will realize Socialist hopes.

The stage is now being prepared for a return to a class fight on a class basis. The Communist Party will undoubtedly seek at all costs to maintain a working-class-Capitalist alliance in favour of the Soviet-Franco Pact and against Fascist Germany.

But underneath the forces of the class struggle gather on both sides, and they will not be denied.

CHAPTER XI

THE POPULAR FRONT IN OTHER COUNTRIES

FRANCE and Spain are the only two countries in which there have been avowedly Popular Front Governments, though, as already shown, the Coalition Governments of Social Democrats and Liberals, both of the past and present, express in fact the same political principle. The result has always been the same. An alliance with Capitalist forces inevitably means the sacrifice of the class struggle and of Socialism for the defence of Capitalism.

But it is not only when the stage of government is reached that the Popular Front tactic becomes disastrous. It involves the subordination of the class struggle and of the class fight against War, Imperialism, and Capitalism during the period of preparation for a Popular Front Government.

In this chapter we will look briefly at the effect of the Popular Front in two types of countries: (a) the Fascist countries, and (b) those countries which Soviet Russia regards as potential allies.

One would expect the experience of Fascism to teach one thing clearly—the futility of “democratic” Capitalism as a safeguard against Capitalism. It was the attempt to maintain “democratic” Capitalism and the hesitation to go forward boldly through workers’ unity to the Workers’ State which opened the way for Fascism in Germany. When working-class flabbiness provided ruthless Fascism

with the opportunity, "democratic" institutions soon disappeared !

After such an experience we should expect the working class movement in the Fascist countries to recognize that the struggle against Fascism must take on the character, not of a return to Capitalist "democracy", but of a clean-cut fight for Workers' Power and Socialism which alone can guarantee the destruction of Fascism. In such a fight encouragement would be given to all elements within the Fascist State resisting encroachments on their rights, but the working class would keep itself absolutely free from any entanglements with other sections which would prevent it from preparing, as fully as illegal conditions allow, for the struggle for Workers' Power and the Socialist Revolution.

When, however, the Communist International adopted Capitalist "democracy" rather than Socialism as an objective, it gave instructions to its parties in the Fascist countries to form a Popular Front with all sections which tend to resist Fascist interference with their liberty, and to put forward a programme which dropped all idea of the class struggle and of Socialism, and which concentrated instead on a reversion to bourgeois democracy and social reforms within Capitalism. On the economic side the social reforms advocated by the Fascists were even adopted as the basis of the programme !

At a conference of the German Communist Party held secretly in Belgium during 1934, a programme indistinguishable from Capitalist Liberalism was adopted. An alliance with Social Democrats, Catholics and Liberals was proposed on the basis of civil, religious and Trade Union rights ; liberty of speech, worship and association—the kind of programme which aroused enthusiasm among Radicals towards the end of the nineteenth century ! The German

Communists did not even visualize a Workers' State constructing Socialism when Fascism was finally overthrown. They looked forward to the election of a national assembly and the formation of a Popular Front Government to restore "democracy".

It is difficult to believe that anyone can conceive of Fascism being overthrown under conditions which would permit the summoning of an elected parliament, the formation of a Popular Front Government and the orderly restoration of "democracy". The methods of brutal terror which Fascism has employed are enough to show that it will fight to the death by the most savage means and that only by a fierce struggle for power and social revolution will it be conquered. In such a situation national assemblies elected by adult suffrage and the restoration of constitutional democracy will be utterly utopian. •

It must be emphasized that the alliance with the Social Democrats, Catholics and Liberals proposed by the Communists was not a temporary united front for the purpose of stimulating expression of opposition to Hitler. That would have been justified from a Revolutionary Socialist point of view. It was an alliance which threw over the class struggle. This was clearly indicated in an appeal "For the Reconciliation of the German People" issued by the Communist Party, in which an alliance with the National-Socialist (that is, Fascist) masses on the basis of the programme on which Hitler achieved power was advocated !

These are extracts from it—

"The Communist Party of Germany calls for the reconciliation of the anti-fascist and National-Socialist masses. . . . The vital interests of the German people demand that the non-National-Socialists offer a brotherly hand to the National-Socialist masses in the fight for peace, freedom and well-being. . . .

"The appeal of the Communist Party of Germany calls upon the German people to stick together, *to take the National Socialist leaders at their word, to enforce the realization of those former demands of the National-Socialist Party which are in the interests of the people.*"—(International Press Correspondence, Vol. 16, No. 48.)

On the economic side the Fascist programme was to be made the basis of the alliance. On the political side the objective was "democracy" as enjoyed under Capitalism before the triumph of Hitler.

"We ask you to recall the slogans of the struggle for democratic rights in 1918," wrote the Communist Party in an Open Letter to German Catholics. "We ask you to recall the defence of democratic traditions through the efforts of the Centre Party of Southern Germany and the slogan of Wirth, 'the enemy is to the right'. We hope that German Catholicism is ready to revive these progressive traditions in the struggle against Hitler in collaboration with anti-Hitler forces, and thus restore the honour and dignity of the German people."

The reader will note the appeal to patriotism which has become an accepted motif of Communist declarations in all countries. The significance of the references to the Centre Party may not be seen so immediately. It was the Centre Party which deserted the fight for democracy when put to the test. The Social Democrats coalesced with it to prevent Fascism—only to find that it preferred Capitalism with Fascism to the ending of Capitalism. In those days the Communists were foremost in denouncing the policy of "the lesser evil" reflected by this compromise between the working class and Capitalist parties. Now it advocates the same policy and appeals to the records of the treacherous Centre Party as an argument for it! The Communists still acclaim the memories of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa

Luxemburg, forgetting that these heroic working-class fighters were assassinated by the Social Democrats because they refused to substitute the objective of bourgeois democracy for the social revolution.

In Italy the Communist policy of unity, not for social revolution, but for the original programme of Fascism, has been put forward even more emphatically. The urgency of the manifesto issued by the Italian Communist Party is probably explained by the fact that it was published at a time when Soviet Russia was playing with the idea of breaking the Rome-Berlin axis and winning Italy for the anti-German bloc of nations. The manifesto began, as in the case of the German manifesto, by making an appeal for the reconciliation of Fascists and non-Fascists—

“Only the brotherly union of the people of Italy brought about by the reconciliation of Fascists and non-Fascists will be in a position to break down the power of the blood-suckers in our country. . . .

“Let us reach out our hands to each other, children of the Italian nation, Fascists and Communists, Catholics and Socialists, people of all opinions, and let us march side by side to enforce the right of existence of the citizens of a civilized country as ours is. We have the same ambition—to make Italy strong, free and happy.”

Who would have believed a few years ago that a Communist Party could issue such a manifesto? If it had been published as a Communist document, it would everywhere have been denounced as a wicked forgery. The reference to “blood-suckers” is the only militant note, but the manifesto carefully explains that by blood-suckers is meant, not the Capitalist class, but only a few monopolists, and it appeals for the union of the small bourgeoisie and the workers against them—an appeal which any Liberal would accept.

The manifesto goes on to advocate a Popular Front including "Democrats, Liberals and Catholics" to fight for the Fascist programme of 1919—

"Workers and Intellectuals, Socialists, Democrats, Liberals, Catholics! Use all your endeavours for the reconciliation and unity of the Italian people, for the creation of a People's Front in Italy. The present rulers in Italy wish to keep the Italian people split into Fascists and non-Fascists. Let us raise high the banner of unity of the people for bread, work, liberty and peace!

"We proclaim that we are prepared to fight, together with you and the whole Italian people, for the carrying out of the Fascist programme of 1919, and for every demand which represents a particular or general and immediate interest of the workers and people of Italy."—(International Press Correspondence, Vol. 16, No. 48.)

It will be seen that the People's Front of Workers, Intellectuals, Socialists, Democrats, Liberals and Catholics is to unite to make Italy "strong, free and happy" on a Fascist programme of reforms within Capitalism. Its authors have forgotten that the whole case of Socialism is that no people can be made "strong, free and happy" within Capitalism. To delude workers like this is a crime.

Austria is a third Fascist country in which the same line has been pursued. The supreme object of the Communists is to prevent an alliance between Austria and Germany, and for this purpose they have thrown out feelers for common action even with the Schuschnigg Fascists, who insist on the independence of Austria, against the pro-German National-Socialists. When the Revolutionary Socialist Party issued a slogan, "Down with Schuschnigg", the Communist Party condemned it. "We will wage the struggle against Hitler not only with anti-Fascists, but also

together with all anti-National-Socialists", the Communists wrote. The implication was clear. The Communists were prepared to regard Schuschnigg and his section of Fascists as allies against the Nazis, not because Schuschnigg was less an enemy of the working class than the Nazis, but because he was a national patriot who opposed the union of Austria with Germany.

The Communist Party of Austria is formed largely of workers who were disillusioned by the compromising Social Democratic policy pursued prior to the destruction of "Red Vienna" in February, 1933—destroyed, let us remember, by the Schuschnigg Fascists. They saw that reliance upon the more liberal elements of the Capitalist Parties, rather than upon the independent class action of the workers, had not prevented the Fascist putsch. It was this revolt against collaboration with a section of the Capitalist class which was responsible for the dramatic advance of the Austrian Communist Party from a mere group to a strong party in 1933. Socialists who became Communists on these grounds are not likely to be satisfied when they see their new Party adopting what is in principle the very same policy to-day. One is not surprised to hear, therefore, that among Austrian Communists, particularly among their youth, there is a strong movement of protest against the new line.

When we turn from the Fascist countries to the countries whom Soviet Russia is wooing as allies, we find the frenzy to secure an alliance with anti-German Capitalist sections even more intense. Czecho-Slovakia is of key importance; it has signed a political and military pact with Soviet Russia. The consequence has been the same as in France—the Communists support the rearmament of their Capitalist State. They declare for "the defence of the Czech Republic at all costs against German, Polish and Hungarian Fascism".¹

¹ Rundschau No. 19, April 23, 1936.

At all costs—not excluding the dropping of the class struggle against their own Capitalist class.

It is not necessary to go from country to country to give evidence of this same policy. Everywhere the Communists have adopted the very policy of "social patriotism" which the Communist International was formed to combat. Switzerland, for example, has been the home of uncompromising working-class opposition to rearmament and war in defence of a Capitalist State, but now Humbert-Droz, leader of the Swiss Communist, writes—

"In the present European situation, the defence of the independence of Switzerland, the safeguarding of its freedom, is part of the international struggle against War and Fascism. The Communist Party is, therefore, ready to defend this independence of the Swiss Commonwealth, and to approve the necessary means for assuring it."¹

The same policy extends to America. The United States of America are of vital importance for the strategy of the Communist International. Despite the strong trend of opinion in America for neutrality in a European war, the Communists hope that if Japan became an ally of Germany in a war against the "democratic" countries the clash between the Capitalist interests of the U.S.A. and Japan would lead America to intervene. Therefore in the United States also the Communist Party must become moderate and patriotic, shelving the social revolution and championing the democratic liberties upon which American Capitalism prides itself. Listen to this pronouncement by Earl Browder, the Communist Party leader—

"America has seen the Communist Party as the most consistent fighter for democracy, for the enforcement of the democratic provisions of our Constitution, for the defence of our

¹*Freiheit*, October 14, 1936.

flag, and the revival of its glorious revolutionary tradition. America has seen that Communism is twentieth-century Americanism."—(*Daily Worker*, New York, November 3, 1936.)

To the miners, steel-workers and longshoremen of Pennsylvania, Pittsburg, and Los Angeles—"twentieth-century Americanism" is the most brutal suppression of strikes by armed guards who shoot to kill or, more mercifully, use tear gas to wipe out the picket lines. To lovers of freedom in all parts of the world "twentieth-century Americanism" represents the murderous execution of Sacco and Vanzetti and the twenty-year-long imprisonment of Tom Mooney. Browder's speech reflects the worst forms of ballyho in which patriotic American politicians indulge.

Indeed, one might be excused for confusing the declarations of Earl Browder with those of President Roosevelt. Both of them base their appeal for democratic liberties and social advance on the "revolutionary traditions" of America. Very often the Communist Party gives the impression that it is a wing of the Democratic Party. In the Presidential Elections it half-heartedly ran a candidate against Roosevelt, but it told the American people in effect "if you don't vote Communist, vote Democratic", and it greeted Roosevelt's victory as a triumph over reaction. When from time to time President Roosevelt or Secretary of State Hull makes one of their platitudinous speeches in favour of democracy against dictatorship, the Communist Party endorsement is almost slavish. For example, after Secretary of State Hull had delivered a typical speech on these lines at the inter-American Peace Conference, Earl Browder came out with this comment—

"The main significance of this speech is that America is more and more emerging as the greatest Power of the Capitalist world on the side of peace and against the Fascist war-makers, and that in this position there is already an appeal to the masses

of the people for organized support, not only for governmental support, but mass support in every country to the struggle for peace."—(*Daily Worker*, New York, December 4, 1936.)

The Inter-American Peace Conference was in fact an instrument of the economic imperialism of the U.S.A. ; its purpose was to combine North and South America politically and economically. South America is an economic colony of the U.S.A. even if the stars and stripes do not fly over its States. Among the peoples of South America there is growing resistance to this imperialism. Yet, instead of exposing this inner purpose of Roosevelt and Hull, the Communist Party leader, thinking first and last of the need to line up Capitalist America with Soviet Russia, joins in the chorus of praise of their speeches, and so adds to the delusions which they create.

The Communist International hopes to bring America into a war against Japan allied to Germany. China is already at war with Japan. Communist policy in China has for some time been directed to liquidating the class struggle, the separate organization of the Red Army, and the independence of the Soviet territories in order to bring about national unity against Japan.

The change of policy in China is perhaps more dramatic than in any country. The Nanking Government, with whom the Communist Party has now realized unity, has been the most bloody suppressor of Communism in the world. To say that it has imprisoned, tortured and executed one hundred thousand men, women and boys for Communist activities and associations is a low estimate. One finds it difficult to select an example of the terror when so many abound. Here is one : In December, 1927, following the abortive Canton Commune, more than 5,000 workers were shot, and the wave of arrests and executions swept over thousands more. During the ten years which followed

there were almost daily reports of the executions of Communists.

But now the Chinese "Soviet Republic" has become incorporated with the rest of China under the Nanking Government, the Red Army has become a part of the National Army, and the Communist Party has abrogated its Socialist programme. The whole class fight for the revolution has been surrendered for national unity against Japan.

No one doubts that the Japanese workers and peasants are justified in resisting Japanese imperialism, but no class-conscious Socialist can justify the liquidation of the independent organization of the Chinese working class and the calling off of the class struggle against Chiang Kai Shek and the Chinese war lords. A really revolutionary Socialist Party would resist Japan, but at the same time it would stimulate the Chinese workers and peasants to take possession of the country for which they are fighting, and would maintain intact the forces of the working class to overthrow the Chiang Kai Shek Government at the first opportunity.

It is not necessary to extend this story, but one international effect of the Popular Front policy should be specially noted.

At every stage in the history of the Socialist struggle the Youth Section of the Movement has naturally been most impatient, militant and revolutionary. Every adult Socialist should welcome this; if there is no fire of revolution in Socialists when they are young they will become crusted old reactionaries in their later years. To suppress this revolutionary instinct is a crime, not only against Socialism to-day, but against the spirit of Youth itself and Socialism to-morrow. Yet in every country the Communist International has encouraged its youth sections to

drop the class fight and the struggle for revolution, and to combine with other youth organizations, however bourgeois and conservative, in a broad youth movement for the defence of "democracy".

The contrast between the Popular Front and the Revolutionary Socialist attitudes to Youth is shown most clearly, perhaps, in Spain. When the Communist and Social Democratic Youth formed a United Youth Movement, taking in Liberal sections, they explicitly repudiated Socialism. Here are some extracts from their manifesto—

"The United Youth are not Marxist Youth. We do not fight for the Socialist Revolution. Our organization is not Socialist nor Communist.

"We want the unity of all youth, not on Marxist and Communist bases, but on bases of mutual confidence, such as the war against Fascism and the defence of civilization. Do not be deceived. We call for Unity, and we declare that we are not trying to absorb you. We fight for a democratic Parliamentary Republic."

It is sufficient to quote from the programme of the Revolutionary Youth of Spain, composed of the P.O.U.M. Youth Section and the Young Libertarians, to indicate the contrast—

"We fight for the unity of Revolutionary Youth—not for unity without aims, but for the united action of all working and revolutionary youth. For working youth there is but one task—to conquer the Fascists and to accomplish the Revolution. We will not let ourselves be robbed of the right of Marxist criticism. The war in Spain is an advance skirmish in the world-wide battle between Fascism and Social Revolution."

If it be thought that the special circumstances of Spain particularly influenced the Communist line of throwing

over the class struggle and Socialism, similar declarations of youth policy in many countries could be given. The example given here is the appeal for the establishment of a German Youth League in Czecho-Slovakia to replace the German section of the Communist Youth League—

“Youth, be united, united for our nation, for the things that justly are due to you—for justice, freedom and peace! In order to achieve this goal we are creating a League which is to unify the entire youth and all its organizations into one mighty force, the German Youth League of Czecho Slovakia. Itself non-partisan, this League is to include the entire youth who want to struggle for the great ideals of our nation—justice, freedom and peace. Comradely understanding, the desire to work together for our nation, is to be the leit-motif of our work. . . .

“Let every opponent know that we are no cowardly weaklings, but rather that we will defend, together with all the nationalities in Czecho Slovakia, our peace and our hearths. . . .

“Comrades, boys! Comrades, girls! We want to be that youthful force which will intervene with a firm hand in the fate of the youth and turn it for the better. Our programme is the programme of a happy youth. Our programme is the unity of youth.”

If the Czecho-Slovakian Government had wanted to issue an appeal to German youth in its territory to become good young patriots to defend the Capitalist State, it could not have issued a better document. In form and spirit this appeal to youth is almost identical with the appeals which are issued by Fascist organizations to young people to join their ranks. There is no mention of the class struggle or of the root evil of Capitalism or of the need for Socialism. The stress is on national unity, defence of the nation and a

vague call for justice, freedom and peace. This is now the call which the Communist International sounds to the youth of the world !

The Popular Front policy is a consistent policy. It seeks to mobilize the maximum unity for the defence of Capitalist democracy. But let no one pretend that it is a Socialist policy. By its very nature the Popular Front, because it is based on an alliance with Capitalist Parties, must be non-proletarian and non-Socialist. It represents a surrender of the class struggle and of the social revolution. The evidence from every country in the world where the Popular Front has been operated or advocated proves this to be the case.

CHAPTER XII

THE INTERNATIONAL FORCES OF THE WORKING CLASS

WE HAVE seen where the working-class movement has gone wrong. We have now to face the problem of how it is to be got right. It has gone wrong because it has departed from the basis of the class struggle, and entered into alliances with Capitalist sections and identified itself with the Capitalist State. It will begin to go right only when it reverts to class action on a class basis, seeks to unite all working-class forces in a Workers' Front, and adopts the policy of the intensification of the class struggle and the social revolution.

There are really two problems. The first is one of organizational relationship. The aim must be an alliance of all sections of the working class instead of an alliance with sections of the Capitalist class. The second problem is that of policy. There is not much point in rejecting Capitalist alliances if working-class organizations continue to pursue policies which do not reflect the class struggle, and which identify the working class with the interests of the Capitalist class and the Capitalist State.

In Britain, for example, the Labour Party has so far rejected the proposal of a Popular Front alliance with the Liberal Party, but it pursues a policy of constant compromise with the Capitalist class and identifies itself completely with the Capitalist State. It is slavishly loyal to Monarchism, it does not oppose rearmament under a Capitalist Government, and it utopianly believes that peace can be maintained through the League of Nations, and Socialism be established

through the Capitalist State. Class unity on the policy of the Labour Party would not mean the class struggle or a challenge to Capitalism.

This consideration compels Revolutionary Socialists to reject the policy of even class unity at any price; they would like to see a united class organization fighting on the basis of the class struggle for Workers' Power and Socialism; they desire united action by all sections of the working class, reformist as well as revolutionary; but they are not prepared for unity with reformist sections, if such unity means that their voices must be silenced and that revolutionary leadership and action become impossible. To accept such unity would be surrender of what is vital if the workers are ever to be directed towards their goal. The problem of the Workers' Front is to find a basis which will allow united action on specific issues where agreement exists, and at the same time permit liberty of criticism and of leadership on issues about which differences of opinion remain.

Let us look at the International Working-class Movement from the point of view of this double necessity.

There are six organizational groupings within the international working-class movement on its political side. For the sake of clearness I tabulate them—

Labour and Socialist International (Second International)

Communist International (Third International)

International Bureau for Revolutionary Socialist Unity
(Independent Revolutionary Parties)

International Communist Opposition.

Anarchist International

Fourth International (Trotskyist)

Three of these international political groupings have Trade Union organizations attached to them. The mass

Trade Union Movement in Europe is affiliated to the International Federation of Trade Unions, which works in alliance with the Second International. The Communist-controlled Red Trade Unions have been disbanded outside Russia, but the large Trade Union Movement of Russia is still associated with the Third International.¹ There are Syndicalist Unions associated with the Anarchist International, but only in Spain are they of considerable strength.

To complete the picture of the international working-class movement we must add the political parties and the Trade Unions which have no international connections.

The Labour Parties in the British Dominions are not affiliated to any International, although they are loosely associated in a British Commonwealth Labour Federation. The Indian Congress Socialist Party, which is of growing importance, is also without any international affiliation. In South America, except Argentine, most of the working-class parties have no international affiliations.

The same is true of most of the Trade Union Movements in America and the British Dominions. In the United States, whilst the Socialist Party is affiliated to the Second International, neither the American Federation of Labour nor the Committee of Industrial Organization (John Lewis's militant Unionism) is affiliated to the International Federation of Labour, though, after years of boycotting all international associations, the A.F.O.L. has now applied for affiliation in order to gain support in its struggle with John Lewis.

It is almost enough to list the international organizations of the working class to indicate the chaos which exists and the difficulties which must be overcome before a united international workers' front can be achieved. When we add to the differences of organization the cross currents of policy the problem to be solved becomes still bigger.

¹ Later—it is now negotiating for affiliation to the I.F.T.U.

The Second International. The cross currents within the Second International are in themselves sufficiently great. If by an International we mean an organization with a common policy and which acts unitedly, we must dismiss the Second International as no International at all. It hasn't common policy and it rarely acts unitedly. Almost every shade of policy is reflected in its membership. There are parties within it, such as those of Sweden, Denmark, Belgium and Czecho-Slovakia, which not only cling to the most gradualist policy for the achievement of Socialism through the Capitalist State, but which act in coalition with Capitalist parties in the Governments of their countries. There are parties like the British Labour Party which are equally moderate in policy, but which reject any alliance with a Capitalist party. There are parties like the Spanish and French, which belong to Popular Front Governments and which are allied with the Communist Parties of their countries. There are parties like the Scandinavian and British, which will not associate with the Communist Party at any price. There are parties, like the Austrian, Polish Bund and (to a large extent) the American Socialist Party, which go far towards the acceptance of a Revolutionary Socialist view. Within most of the Second International Parties there are sections which reflect all these policies.

It is obviously impossible for an international organization so composed to act with effective unity. When decisions are reached either at the Triennial Conferences or by the more frequent sessions of the Bureau they are vague, and generally leadership in action is lost in the confusion of many words. In actual fact, the Second International is little more than a distributing centre of information and a collecting centre for very inadequate funds for refugees. There is hardly a party in the world which pays any attention to it when reaching decisions for action.

The Third International. The Communist International is a great contrast. When its Executive at Moscow reaches a decision its sections in all parts of the world immediately obey. But this is a weakness as well as a strength. It represents not so much spontaneous unity of opinion as centralized control by one section of the International which overwhelms in membership and finance all others, and upon which the others are largely dependent.

The Russian Communist Party is the largest working-class party in the world, and its resources are the greatest. It also has the tremendous advantage of identification with the Soviet Government, which rules one-sixth of the earth's surface. The only other sections of the Third International which are of any important strength are those of France, Spain, Czecho-Slovakia, and China. It is inevitable that in such a top-heavy International the Russian Communist Party should dominate.

Recognition should be given to the moral right of the Russian Communist Party to exert influence, because it represents the only country in the world where the social revolution has been accomplished. But there are obvious dangers in an International structure so overbalanced, and experience has shown that these dangers have not been avoided. The Communist International, instead of reflecting the combined will and experience of Revolutionary Socialists in all parts of the world, has become an instrument for the expression of the policy of Soviet Russia. The various sections of the Communist International change and turn about automatically as Russian policy changes and turns.

The element of finance is a factor. No Revolutionary Socialist will object to an international organization assisting sections which are weak, and concentrating special assistance upon sections which operate in key countries or

where the struggle has reached a critical point ; that should be an accepted duty of any Socialist International. But when the Party of one country dominates an International and provides ninety per cent. of its finances, and particularly when that Party is closely identified with its Government, the artificial and unhealthy influence which finance can exert is evident.

The fact that the Communist Parties of other countries are largely financed by the Communist Party of Russia through the Communist International inevitably influences the determination of policy. If they do not maintain a policy which suits Comintern, their supplies are immediately threatened. There has been more than one instance—Czecho-Slovakia and America are cases—where the Executive Committees of Communist Parties, although supported by a majority of members, have been deposed by the Moscow centre of the International because of differences of view regarding policy.

The British Communist Party can be taken as an example of the pressure which can be exerted owing to this over-weighted financial structure. The membership of the British Communist Party is about 10,000. I am the Secretary of a Party with a similar membership ; I know the difficulties of maintaining Party activities with the finances available from such an organization. Despite the most generous giving by the membership of the I.L.P., we can maintain only a skeleton staff at Head Office, one weekly newspaper, one monthly journal, and three paid organizers throughout the country. I do not know the size of the Communist Party's Head Office staff, but I know that it has paid organizers in most of the large centres of Britain, that the Party has a daily newspaper (on which the loss must be very heavy), an elaborate monthly journal, and officials in a dozen subsidiary organizations. It is obvious

that it must be subsidized by the Communist International to the extent of thousands of pounds a year. Its activity and the livelihood of its considerable number of officials are dependent upon the satisfaction which it gives to Moscow.

If one had the most perfect democratic constitution, with generous opportunities of consultation and give-and-take, it would still be inevitable under the conditions of the Communist International that the pressure of financial control from Russia should influence the policy of its sections. But the structure of the Communist International and of its sections is not democratic ; everything is directed from above. We can, therefore, be excused if we interpret the gramophonic exactitude with which every change of policy is accepted as indicating, to put it moderately, that dependence upon Moscow contributes towards the rigidity of discipline attained.

This problem of the centralized control of the Communist International under Russian domination becomes more important and disquieting in view of the evidence from Russia itself during the last twelve months of the most severe repression of sections which are opposed to the official policy of Stalin and his colleagues. When one after another the comrades of Lenin who had a main part in the achievement of the revolution are imprisoned or shot, and when week after week reports come from all parts of Russia of executions, suicides and imprisonments, it is inevitable that scepticism should grow and that one should become hesitant about an International dominated by a Party leadership which can carry through this terror. One must also become doubtful about its permanence. An institution governed in this way must always be on the edge of a volcano.

The discipline of the Communist Party is such that

differences within it are not revealed until the point of resignations or splits has been reached. It is not therefore possible to estimate the political trends within it as we have been able to do in the case of the Second International. But one knows that there are thousands of genuine Revolutionary Socialists within the Communist Party, and it is impossible that the betrayals of the class struggle expressed in the Popular Front and the policies of the last three years should not have aroused doubt and dismay among them.

The second and Third Internationals are the mass organizations—the Second because it represents major working-class movements in countries outside Russia; the Third because it represents the vast organized mass within Russia. But this does not mean that the other international organizations are not important. It is a great mistake to pay attention only to the big battalions. Vitality of ideas and spirit are often channelled through smaller groupings.

The International Bureau. The International Bureau for Revolutionary Socialist Unity represents nine independent parties which base their policy on the class struggle and the social revolution. They include the Spanish P.O.U.M., the British I.L.P., the Palestine Workers' Party and the Swedish Socialist Party—all of some significance—two parties driven underground in Fascist countries, the German Socialist Workers' Party and the Italian Socialist Party (Maxamalist), as well as small parties in Holland, Poland and Rumania. Of significance equal to the actual affiliations are the contacts of the Bureau with the revolutionary sections in the Second International and outside. The purpose of the Bureau is, as its name indicates, to bring about Revolutionary Socialist unity. It is increasingly serving as a centre, not only of information and ideas, but of co-ordinated activity. Its contacts include

Revolutionary sections in the Socialist Parties of France, Austria, Norway, Denmark, Switzerland, America, India, Australia and other countries.

With its Revolutionary Socialist basis the International Bureau is, of course, severely critical of the policies of both the Second and Third Internationals, and looks forward to the establishment of an International of the working class which shall be truly revolutionary. But it does not take the view that such an International should be established artificially ; it recognizes that unless there is a mass revolt against the line of the present Internationals and a mass demand for a new International, arising from a real revolutionary upsurge, its formation would merely add to the present chaos and make the realization of revolutionary unity more difficult. It seeks to stimulate the forces making for the establishment of a revolutionary International, but it refrains from dogmatism as to the organizational and other circumstances out of which it will arise. It may be by the influence of the Revolutionary Socialists within the Second International, it may be by a revolution within the Communist International, it may be by a coming together of the Revolutionary sections in both Internationals and those outside them. Meanwhile, it is performing the useful service of extending the contacts and common action of all revolutionary sections to whatever organizations they may be attached.

The International Communist Opposition. Closely linked with the International Bureau is the International Communist Opposition, led by Thalheimer and Brandler, who were leaders of the German Communist Party, and Jay Lovestone, who was the leader of the American Communist Party. Thalheimer was one of the authors of the first historic thesis of the Communist International.

For a time the I.C.O. retained its faith in the

Communist International, and it still hopes that the Communist Party of Soviet Russia may throw over the bureaucracy of Stalin and so save the International as a revolutionary instrument, but recent developments, particularly those in Spain, have led it to an attitude almost indistinguishable from that of the International Bureau. The clarification of the policy of the Bureau Parties has also contributed to approximation with the I.C.O.

The Anarchist International. The Anarchist International represents organizations which reflect the philosophy of Bakunin, whose quarrel with Karl Marx over the use of the State broke in pieces the First International. The Anarchists do not believe in using the machine of the Capitalist State; they hope to realize the social revolution by the direct action of the workers and peasants in seizing the factories and land, and administering them through their Trade Unions without the control of governments. Outside Spain the Anarchists are weak, though they have been growing recently in France. Their Syndicalist Unions (the C.N.T.) form the strongest industrial organization in Spain, and they also have Unions in Sweden, France, and Holland, though not of great importance.

The developments in Spain have greatly modified Anarchist policy. As we have seen, the Syndicalist Unions for a time accepted responsibility for membership of the Central Government and the Catalonian Government. There was some criticism of this departure from pure Anarchism in other sections of the International, but there is no doubt that the Spanish experience has caused a wide reconsideration of views, and this opens out the possibility of closer co-operation with Revolutionary Socialists. There is not a great divergence between those on the one hand who hold with Karl Marx that, whilst the Capitalist State should be used by Socialists, the social revolution must be carried

through by the organs of the working class, and those on the other hand who take the view that normally the Capitalist State should be boycotted, but that in critical situations like that of Spain the use of the Capitalist State is justified.

The Fourth International. Finally, there are the followers of Leon Trotsky, who have established the Fourth International. Like the parties attached to the International Bureau they base the whole of their policy on the class struggle directed towards the Social Revolution, but, in addition to matters of tactic, they differ from the Bureau in their estimate of the situation in Soviet Russia, in their attitude to the united front, and in urging the immediate necessity of building up a Fourth International around a thesis which they have drawn up. Trotsky himself, by his writings, exerts a very considerable influence among large sections of the International Working-class Movement; but his groups of followers are small in numbers and their tactics are so invariably destructive and divisive that their organizations count for little.

Such is the International Working-class Movement! It must be clear to all that there can be no hope of bringing these varied organizations into one rigidly disciplined International, whether reformist or revolutionary. In such circumstances, the only practical method of realizing unity can be for all sections—or for as many sections as are willing—to establish a basis of common action on issues about which they are agreed, whilst maintaining liberty on other issues.

What hope is there of realizing unity on this basis? By what method should it be achieved or can it be achieved? These are the questions we must examine.

CHAPTER XIII

TOWARDS AN INTERNATIONAL WORKERS' FRONT

LET us look first at the possibilities or probabilities of international unity, irrespective of its effects upon policy.

There have already been approaches for common action between the Second and Third Internationals. Despite the opposition of the British Labour Party and the Scandinavian Parties, the chairman and secretary of the Second International, M. de Brouckere and Friederich Adler, have met representatives of the Communist International to discuss the possibility of common action on behalf of Spain and in resistance to Fascism and War.

On ideological grounds there is no reason why such common action should not take place. The Second and Third Internationals hold identical views on these subjects. On Spain, they now both favour the lifting of the embargo on arms, and they take the same view about the objective of the struggle. On Fascism, they both stand for the "democratic" rather than the Socialist alternative, and both favour the rearming of the "democratic" countries and the establishment of an alliance between them against the Fascist Powers. On War, they both centre their hopes on the League of Nations and the Collective System of Peace through pacts between Governments. There are all the essentials here for agreed action on these subjects.

Then why is there opposition from the British Labour Party and other sections? Why, if policies so closely approximate, is there continued division between the two mass Internationals?

The answer is to be found partly in "democratic" prejudice against the past policy of the Communist International and partly in continuing distrust of the bonafides of the Communist International, despite its changed policy.

The attitude of the British Labour Party may be taken as typical of the sections in the Second International which oppose common action between the Internationals. The Labour Party does not want to co-operate with the Communists for a number of reasons.

The dominant reason is probably fear of the electoral consequences. In the minds of the respectable middle class public, of whom the Labour Party takes much notice, the revolutionary traditions of the Communist Party still linger. They are "Reds" and "Bolsheviks" in the Capitalist newspaper sense, and an alliance with them would scare away many timid electors who might otherwise vote for Labour candidates. A second reason is the resentment of both Labour Party and Trade Union leaders of the "disruptive" tactics of the Communists. Over a long period of years they have made themselves a nuisance to the official leadership; sometimes this resentment is based on the methods employed by the Communists as well as on the policy for which they have stood. A third reason is dislike of the "dictatorship" in Russia. The Labour Party believes that Socialism can be established by constitutional democratic methods, and opposes the "dictatorship of the proletariat" as strongly as Fascist dictatorship; this ground of antagonism to the Communists has been greatly intensified by the executions in Soviet Russia during the past year. A fourth reason is distrust of the honesty of the Communists; they have made for themselves a reputation for double-dealing and disloyalty and stabbing-in-the-back which it will take much to live down. A fifth reason is

opposition to direction of Communist Party policy by the Executive of the Communist International; the Labour Party is not prepared to ally itself in Britain to an organization which it says is controlled outside Britain. Finally, the Communist Party is small in Britain, and the Labour Party thinks it can afford to ignore it; there is no pressure upon it to come to terms, as there is upon the Socialist Parties of France, Spain and Czecho-Slovakia. The insular habits of British thinking cause the Labour Party to tend to ignore both the situation in other countries and the importance of the Russian Communist Party in international affairs.

It will be seen that the attitude of the Labour Party is founded on a mixture of reasons, some of which will be rejected by Revolutionary Socialists and some accepted. But, be the reasons good or bad, the resistance of British official Labour to association with the Communist International is intense, and with the support of the Scandinavian Social Democratic Parties will probably be sufficient to prevent close collaboration between the two Internationals, despite similarity of policy, for some time.

The Communists are realists, and they may recognize that the attitude of the British Labour Party is an immovable obstacle to international unity within the period which they have in mind—before the outbreak of the World War. Two courses are left open to them. The first is to concentrate on securing unity, or at least united action, country by country. We have seen that they have secured unity with the Socialist Party of Catalonia and succeeded in bringing the united party into the Communist International. They are now negotiating for organizational unity both in Spain and France.¹ In countries where the question of

¹ The matter of international affiliations is a difficulty; it is unlikely that the French Socialist Party would be ready to go into the Third International.

organizational unity is not approachable, the Communists are pressing for a united front agreement. Over a large part of Europe they may get this, even though the opposition of Britain and Scandinavia be maintained.

But this is not likely to be sufficient for the Communists. Britain is a key country for Soviet Russia, and they desperately want unity with the Labour Party. Hopes were high with the first successes of the Unity Campaign in the early part of 1936, but for reasons we will consider in a later chapter the cause of unity has received a severe setback. What will be the Communists' next step?

The desire is so great to strengthen within the Social Democratic and Labour Parties the tendencies which are making for an international policy in line with the policy of Soviet Russia that we must foresee the possibility of the liquidation of the Communist International and the national Communist Parties and the transference of their memberships to the parties attached to the Second International. After all, this has been done already in the case of the Red Trade Union International and its national sections. And there is this basic fact: the Communist International is no longer fulfilling any distinctive purpose except the representation of Russian policy. So far from opposing "social-patriotism" (the cause of its formation), the Communist International advocates it; so far from intensifying the class struggle it subdues it; so far from repudiating identification with the Capitalist State it practises it; so far from stimulating revolt against Imperialism it restricts it; so far from fanning world revolution, it restrains social revolution wherever it threatens. The Second International admirably served these purposes before the Third International was established. Why then the Third International?

Yet, despite the parallel policies of the two Internationals

on the major issues of the time, I doubt whether the Communist International will be liquidated in the immediate future. As instruments of Russia the various Communist Parties cannot yet be dispensed with; the parties of the Second International are not sufficiently reliable. But as soon as the moment comes when Soviet Russia regards the attitude of the Second International as dependable, one can expect the Communist International and the Communist Parties to disappear. No doubt a developed "Friends of the Soviet Union" organization will take their place to act as a mobilization centre for the Communists who go into the Second International Parties.

There is one other possibility of which a hint has been given above. What is happening in Soviet Russia at the present time may have profound consequences. The trials and executions are on such an extended scale and such important individuals are involved that it is impossible to believe that there will not be in time deep repercussions within the Russian Communist Party with wide effects upon the International. The International is so dependent upon the Russian Communist Party that anything drastic which happens to it is bound to affect deeply the organization and policy of Communist Parties in all parts of the world. Already the trials and executions are causing a ferment of discussion. If they bring about a convulsion in the Russian Communist Party it will spread to every section of the Communist International. One possible result would be changes both in structure and policy which would lead to International Communism recovering its revolutionary function. If this happened the prospects for effective Revolutionary Socialist unity and action on an international scale would be enormously increased.

But for the time being we must assume the Communist International as it is, and we must anticipate, in some form

or other (either by unity, united fronts or some international association), the development of closer co-operation between the two mass Internationals on a policy of collaboration with sections of the Capitalist class and with Capitalist Governments. Even if the British Labour Party maintains its opposition to any association with Communist Parties, the approximation of the policies of the two Internationals will inevitably bring them nearer together in action and organization.

Then will come the next step. The Communist Parties will endeavour to guide unity or united action with the Second International parties to the further stage of united action with the "democratic" Liberal Parties in a Popular Front. As the Fascist danger increases they will probably succeed in a number of countries, because organizationally the Communists have logic on their side. If Socialists stand for *policies* of collaboration with the Capitalist class and identification with the Capitalist State, if they place as their main objective the defence of bourgeois democracy, there is no justifiable reason why they should refuse to collaborate with Capitalist *parties*, which stand for the same thing. Events will drive Socialist Parties to this conclusion if they maintain their present policies. In such circumstances the Popular Front will extend to more countries and will clothe itself in some international form.

What should be the attitude of Revolutionary Socialists to the coming together of the Second and Third Internationals?

It is clear that Revolutionary Socialists cannot identify themselves with it, because its basis will be a policy which betrays the class struggle. But, on the other hand, Revolutionary Socialists cannot be indifferent to it or allow themselves to be isolated from it. Unity or united action between the two Internationals would represent the mass of the

European Working-class Movement, together with important and (under the stimulation of such unity) probably growing sections in other Continents. Despite its wrong policies, such working-class unity would reflect a *class* development of tremendous significance, and would represent the force in the world which Revolutionary Socialists must influence if they are to succeed.

The greatest danger which faces Revolutionary Socialists is the temptation to follow tactics which isolate them from the mass of the working class. They must never forget that their own principle of the class struggle demands that they identify themselves with the working class as a class, whatever its mistakes, and requires that working-class unity on a class basis should be welcomed, even though its policy be wrong. The coming together of the working class is in itself an expression of the class consciousness and class solidarity which must precede action on a class basis. The unity of the Second and Third Internationals would be directed to a non-class policy, but it would nevertheless express class power, and certainly the possessing class would appreciate that, whilst it had little to fear from present policy, in the united movement an instrument had been forged which might be wielded with disastrous effect to Capitalism should its policy change.

The problem of Revolutionary Socialists is, therefore, to pursue a tactic which will open the way for common action with the mass movement without loss of the liberty to give a revolutionary lead. At the present time the independent Revolutionary Socialist Parties have liberty of leadership with little opportunity of common action with the mass movement, whilst the Revolutionary Socialists within the Second International have common action with little liberty to give a revolutionary lead. Neither has found the solution of this problem.

I believe the solution must be found in the adoption of a new principle in the organizational relationships of the working class. The point has already been made that policy differences render impossible the realization of one disciplined International. Even if the Second and Third Internationals united, this would not be achieved. Important sections within the united International would vigorously resist its policy and there would be internal controversy and breakaways. At the first attempt to impose disciplined international action the organization would split. Outside it, the Revolutionary Socialists and the Anarchists would remain separately organized.

How can common action between these various sections of the working class be secured? *I believe the answer is by the adoption of the principle of federation.* Is there any reason why all international working-class organizations should not be federated in a common centre, enabling them to act together on every issue upon which they are agreed, whilst at the same time they maintain independence of speech and action on other issues?

Such a Federation might be composed in the first instance of four sections—

1. Social Democratic (including Labour Parties).
2. Communist.
3. Revolutionary Socialist.
4. Anarchist.

If developments cause the Social Democratic and Communist Parties to move towards unity, they would become one section. At the same time steps towards unity between the Revolutionary Socialists inside and outside the Second International might be expected. They are divided now only on this question of relation to the mass working-class movement. If a solution of this problem

were realized on the basis of federation, they would naturally move towards each other.

One of the greatest weaknesses of the present chaotic organization of the working class is that its divisions are artificial. The Communists and Social Democrats approximate towards the same policy, yet in many countries their rival organizations keep them in fierce conflict. The Revolutionary Socialists attached to the International Bureau, the Communist Opposition, and the Revolutionary Socialists within the Second International are one in policy, yet they cannot act together publicly because the latter fear that disciplinary action would be taken against them. The reconstruction of the international movement on a basis of federated unity, with the natural coming together within the federation of those who hold a common view of policy would have a healthy and clarifying effect. It would strengthen the whole, and it would strengthen each part.

But the Second International, and still less the Third International, is not likely to consider the federal proposal so long as it feels that it can afford to ignore the Revolutionary Socialist Parties. *The first duty of Revolutionary Socialists is to strengthen and co-ordinate their own organizations.*

The support which has been forthcoming for the attitude of P.O.U.M. in Spain shows that the Revolutionary Socialist view is held by a large number of sections of the working class which are not attached to the International Bureau. It is hoped to bring these together early in 1938 in an international conference. This conference should result in a considerable development of the representative character and influence of the Bureau. It should result at least in the unification of the Bureau and the International Communist Opposition. The latter has an able and vigorous section in America, and its German section is carrying on

important underground work despite the repression of the Hitler regime. It has leaders of experience and international standing who could contribute much to the growth of a united Revolutionary Socialist Movement.

The second line of development towards Revolutionary Socialist unity must be the extension of contacts, discussion and co-ordinated action between the International Bureau and the Revolutionary sections within the Second International. As already indicated, the contacts are considerable, but the discipline of the Second International prevents open association. Every means of overcoming artificial organizational barriers must be found. One promising means which is now being discussed is the publication of an International Journal in English, French, German and Spanish, to which all sections of the working class who hold the revolutionary view would contribute.

But some caution is required even in approaching Revolutionary Socialist unity. The need for care was shown at the International Bureau conference at Brussels in October, 1936. A number of little organizations which in general accept the revolutionary view sent delegates, but they had no creative force. Their minds are dominated by the "crimes of Stalinism" to such an extent that all their vitality goes into negative criticism; such groups are mentally and emotionally incapable of building anything, and they would merely be a wrecking influence within a united Revolutionary Movement.

Most of these groups are cantankerous off-shoots from Trotskyist organizations. They are worse than their original associates, but the same characteristics of negation and disruption also apply in large part to the sections of the "Fourth International". I regard what has happened to Leon Trotsky as a great tragedy. He has a brilliant mind, but inevitably his experiences have concentrated it upon the

wrongs committed by the heads of Soviet Russia and the Communist International. Among his followers are men and women of great intellectual capacity and courage, but too often they have the mental attitude of their leader, and the merely divisive influence of the Trotskyist groups wherever they are to be found is the reflection of this. Apart from differences of policy, on the question of the Fourth International, Soviet Russia, and the united front, these characteristics rule them out at present from an effective part in the construction of a united Revolutionary Socialist Movement.

There are two further elements which are of importance in the development of a united Revolutionary Movement. The first is the dissentient section within the Communist International. In some cases, for example in Czechoslovakia, many of the dissentients have broken from the Communist Party. In other cases, they are still inside. Communist discipline makes contact with such difficult, but experience is showing that it is not impossible. It goes without saying that such contacts are of great importance whenever they can be made.

The second element is the Socialist Youth Movement. There is an International Youth Bureau attached to the Second International, composed of the Youth Sections of its parties. A majority of the sections represented on the Bureau hold the Revolutionary Socialist view. Indeed, the British Labour Party was so disturbed by its influence and policy that it insisted upon the withdrawal from it of the Labour League of Youth. There is also a Youth Section of the International Bureau for Revolutionary Socialist Unity, and contacts between it and sections of the Second International are close. From this there is the promise of hopeful developments towards the unity of Revolutionary Socialist Youth.

Finally, there is the question of the relationship of Anarchists and Revolutionary Socialists. The struggle in Spain has brought the Spanish Syndicalists and Revolutionary Socialists close together in united action. The association of the C.N.T. and the British I.L.P. has been particularly friendly; when the Communists were denouncing the I.L.P. and its chairman, James Maxton, as Fascist agents and spies, the National Committee of the C.N.T. issued a public declaration of appreciation of what the I.L.P. had done to assist the Spanish workers. The Spanish experience has reopened the whole question of the application of the Anarchist philosophy of the State to a revolutionary situation, and from it there must obviously come much discussion and consideration which may lead to an approximation of Syndicalist and Revolutionary Socialist views. It is to be hoped that the proposed International Journal will give prominence to this discussion. Meanwhile, the Spanish struggle has proved the useful field of co-operation which is available.

This review has indicated the immediate possibilities of Revolutionary Socialist development. The difficulties are great, but the unification of Revolutionary Socialist forces or, where unification is not possible, the closest co-ordination of their activities, must be maintained as a constant and conscious aim. *Unity of the Revolutionary Socialist sections is the first step towards the wider unity of an all-in Federation, a Workers' Front.* The Reformist sections of the Movement will not consider common action with Revolutionary Socialists until the latter have combined with a strength that cannot be ignored. Unity which does not include the Revolutionary Socialist sections would mean only the creation of a stronger instrument for collaboration with the Capitalist class. The objective which Revolutionary Socialists must always keep in mind is a workers' alliance,

including all working-class organizations on a class basis, fighting unitedly as a class on immediate issues, resisting War and Fascism in their own class strength, and leading through this class struggle to the final decisive conflict of the social revolution. The preliminary step to this Revolutionary Workers' Front is the unification of Revolutionary Socialists themselves.

I propose to turn in final chapters to the problem of unity in Britain, and to discuss in some detail the tactics which are required to bring about that combination of united action and revolutionary liberty which must be the next stage towards the realization of the Workers' Front. Clearly if the International Working-class Federation which we have visualized is to be realized, it must depend upon pressure towards the conclusion of a similar basis of unity in the different countries.

CHAPTER XIV

DOES THE LABOUR PARTY PROVIDE A BASIS OF UNITY ?

The Working-class Movement in Britain reflects the chaos which exists in the International Working-class Movement, but it has one distinctive feature of great importance—the organizational structure of the Labour Party.

In other countries the Social Democratic Parties, whilst closely associated with the Trades Unions, are composed entirely of individual members. In Britain the Trades Unions are an integral part of the Labour Party ; they are affiliated to it. Other organizations which accept the Party's constitution may also become affiliated if their application is endorsed by the Executive Committee. Thus the structure of the Party has a federal character ; indeed, the original structure was entirely federal, providing for an alliance of the Trades Unions and the Socialist organizations. After the war the federal basis was supplemented by an individual membership, but this membership is subordinate to the affiliated organizations. Predominantly the federal structure remains.

At first glance it would appear that the British Labour Party is an example of the type of federation proposed in the last chapter as a solution of the organizational problem of the International Working-class Movement, but this is far from being the case. In the Federation we proposed there would be no domination of one section by another ; it would be a free democracy, providing for united action on agreed issues and for liberty of action on other issues. The Labour Party is more than a federation ; it is a party, and

as a party it imposes restrictions which go beyond the conditions we have laid down for Revolutionary Socialist collaboration with other sections of the working class. Nor is its structure democratic.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to consider whether the organizational form of the Labour Party does not provide an opportunity for working-class unity in Britain. Its mass basis gives it great importance; it represents the organized working-class of Britain, and without their support Revolutionary Socialists cannot hope to achieve success. The association of the Trades Unions with the Labour Party makes it of even greater significance than the European Social Democratic Parties, for the industrial organization of the workers will inevitably play a leading part when the decisive struggle with Capitalism comes, and to secure political association with them should be a first object of Revolutionary Socialist tactics.

The undemocratic structure of the Labour Party is the first obstacle to working-class unity within it. When Revolutionary Socialists ask whether they should belong to an organization the preliminary test must be: How far is there democracy within it? If there is inner democracy allowing the membership to control policy, then Revolutionary Socialists will start with the knowledge that if they can win the support of the membership they can secure the direction of its policy. On the other hand, if there is no such democracy, if the structure prevents control of policy by the membership, then Revolutionary Socialists will be deterred from affiliating and only very important considerations will outweigh this disadvantage.

The Labour Party comes badly out of this first test. The rank and file have little control of its policy. Neither the membership of the Trades Unions nor the individual membership have any real voice in deciding policy.

As organizations the Trades Unions are dominant. They are affiliated on a national basis, and at the Annual Conference control two million votes out of a total of two and a half million. The remaining representation at the Conference is from a number of small organizations like the Fabian Society, the Social Democratic Federation, the Socialist Medical Council, the Christian Socialist League (the memberships of which are insignificant), and from the local Labour Party organizations. As the Trades Unions are affiliated to the local Labour Parties through their branches they have double representation. It will be seen that the Trades Unions are all-powerful within the Labour Party.

Trade Union domination of the Labour Party can be justified on the ground that the Trades Unions provide the greater part of the funds of the Party, but the health of any organization depends more upon enthusiastic service than upon monetary contributions, and its vitality is inevitably sapped if the influence of its active workers is subordinated to the influence of those whose function is principally the payment of contributions.

The latter is the position of probably the majority of Trades Union members. They belong to the Labour Party incidentally. When paying their subscriptions to the Trade Union they agree to contribute an additional levy for political purposes. This makes them affiliated members of the Labour Party. They vote for Labour Party candidates when elections come round. Their branch appoints a member who is politically keen as its delegate to the local Labour Party. But there conscious membership of the Labour Party in most cases ends.

This overweighting of the influence of the Trades Union membership is undesirable in itself; it is still more undesirable in view of the absence of control by the Trade

Union rank and file of the political decisions of their organizations.

In the case of most of the Unions the branches never see the agenda of the Labour Party Conference. The way in which the votes of the membership are given at the Conference is decided either by the Trade Union Executive or by the delegation sent to the Conference. In the case of the larger Unions a majority of one in the Executive or the delegation can determine on which side 300,000 or 500,000 votes are cast on some crucial issue. In effect, the Executives of three or four of the larger Trades Unions, often without any reference to their members, decide the policy of the Labour Party on all the major issues which come before the Annual Conference each year. The secretaries carry the votes of the entire membership of their organizations in their hands, and they are given as a block, with no hope of defeating them even if every local Labour Party in the country takes an opposite view.

This dead hand of the block vote of the Trades Unions is naturally resented by the individual members of the Labour Party. They carry on the day-to-day work in the constituencies. They represent the vital activity of the party and contribute the local leaders. They are interested in political problems, and follow and discuss the controversies which agitate the Socialist Movement nationally and internationally. They are the dynamic mental and spiritual force of the Party. Their interest in its affairs is illustrated by the fact that of the resolutions which appeared on the agenda of the Labour Party Conference for 1937, 293 were tabled by local Labour Party organizations. Only nineteen were tabled by Trades Unions.

This dominating influence of the Trades Unions through their monetary contributions also has a serious effect upon the selection of Parliamentary candidates, and thus upon the

decisions on policy made by the Parliamentary Labour Party. On the accepted scale a Parliamentary election costs anything between £400 and £1,000. In addition, it is the custom in strong Labour constituencies to appoint a full-time agent, and there are costs of permanent organization. The local Labour Parties do not possess this money and the grants from the national headquarters are not sufficiently large to enable the expenses to be met. The consequence is that in the majority of cases the Constituency Labour Parties must find a candidate who brings money with him. In any constituency where there is a chance of success, the larger Trades Unions are prepared to provide both the candidate and the money. To them the Constituency Labour Parties are encouraged to turn, whatever their views may be about the suitability of the candidate or the policy for which he stands.

The Constituency Labour Parties have an alternative which is still worse from the point of view of working-class democracy. A considerable number of men and women of means are attracted to the Labour Party. Often they are animated by a genuine sympathy with the poor and sometimes they are intellectually convinced Socialists, but generally they have little knowledge of working-class conditions or experience of the working-class struggle. In some cases they are merely political careerists, who see in the Labour Party a good opportunity for Parliamentary honours. They enter into competition with the Trades Unions for the purchase of candidatures, offering to meet a considerable proportion of the election expenses and of the permanent organization costs.

Unless the Constituency Labour Parties are prepared to fight elections on a minimum of money raised mostly by collections at the meetings (this is the method of the I.L.P.), they have no alternative in most cases except to

adopt as candidate either a Trade Union nominee or a wealthy individual. Often they would prefer another candidate ; there may be a local comrade who has rendered long service, who is trusted and able. But he is poor and therefore ineligible. The best candidate cannot be selected ; either a Trade Union official or a rich philanthropist or careerist must bear the banner of the working class and Socialism.

The second defect of the Labour Party from a Revolutionary Socialist point of view is the limitation which affiliation to it places on freedom of action.

The case of the Socialist League illustrates this. The League took the initiative in promoting a Unity Campaign with the I.L.P. and the Communist Party with the object of bringing about the conditions which would enable all working-class parties to affiliate to the Labour Party. On the face of it this would not appear to be an act of disloyalty to the Labour Party, but the Annual Conference of the Party had decided against a united front with the Communist Party, and with this authority the Party Executive threatened that the Socialist League would be expelled if it did not cease to act with the I.L.P. and C.P. To save themselves from expulsion, the membership of the Socialist League decided to dissolve their organization, maintaining their association with the Labour Party as individual members. They ceased to exist as an organized group.

But of greater importance were the circumstances which led to the I.L.P. disaffiliation from the Labour Party after being associated with it from its establishment in 1900. During the Labour Government of 1929-31 the I.L.P. Group in Parliament opposed its political line. It urged that, instead of being satisfied with a programme "within Capitalism", the Government should introduce a Socialist

programme and stand or fall by it. Capitalism was then going through a period of depression, and crisis could be averted only at the expense of the working class. The Labour Government was prepared to pay even this price and actually became responsible for measures which worsened the conditions of the unemployed and cut down the social services. The I.L.P. Group revolted. It voted against these measures in the House of Commons. At the next election the I.L.P. candidates declined to sign the Standing Orders of the Parliamentary Labour Party which prohibited votes in the House of Commons contrary to Labour Party decisions, and were refused endorsement by the Labour Party Executive. The following July the I.L.P. decided to disaffiliate from the Labour Party.

I have no doubt that the I.L.P. was correct in leaving the Labour Party in 1932, but looking back on events I believe disaffiliation was justified more by its effects upon the I.L.P. than by the organizational relationship of the I.L.P. to the Labour Party. The principal value of disaffiliation has been the change it has brought about in the policy and personnel of the I.L.P. Prior to 1932 the I.L.P. could be called revolutionary only in the vaguest sense. It differed from the Labour Party not so much in any fundamental view of the method of the change from Capitalism to Socialism as in the intensity of its Socialist faith. When the World War came in 1914 it instinctively opposed the war because of its sense of solidarity with the working class of other countries, but it hardly began to think in terms of the social revolution as a means of ending the war. When the Labour Government of 1929-31 showed that it was content to administer Imperialism and Capitalism, the I.L.P. was instinctively shocked by its imprisonment of 60,000 political offenders in India and by its attacks on the standards of living of the workers and unemployed in Britain,

but it did not see clearly the revolutionary implication of the failure of the Labour Government.

But once the I.L.P. became independent of the Labour Party it was compelled to think out its own political philosophy and practice. Events in Europe, and particularly the destruction of the powerful German Working-class Movement by Hitler, assisted this process of political adjustment. For a time it moved towards the Communist International, but once more its Socialist instinct saved it; the political and military alliances of Soviet Russia with Capitalist Governments and their consequences pulled it up sharply, and the subsequent substitution by the C.I. of bourgeois democracy for Socialism as the test of political virtue completed the disillusionment. The I.L.P. has now founded itself firmly on the basis of the class struggle, and upon that it has built a clearly outlined superstructure of Revolutionary Socialist policy.

This development of policy has in itself led to an improvement of personnel. Members who could not keep pace with it have dropped out. The recruits who have joined have done so on the basis of the party's Revolutionary Socialist attitude. But the personnel has also improved because the party has been put to the test of adversity. In the days when the I.L.P. belonged to the Labour Party, political careerists were tempted to join it as a stepping-stone to Parliament and to office. Were not Mr. Ramsay MacDonald and Mr. Philip Snowden past chairmen of the I.L.P. ? Had not over one hundred of the Labour Members of Parliament belonged to the I.L.P. ? In the localities I.L.P. membership was often the gateway of election to the municipal authorities and to important positions within the Labour Movement.

But after disaffiliation the I.L.P. became a party of hard work with little prospect of reward except in the service

given. Its careerists and "soft" Socialists dropped away; its middle-class membership and the so-called intellectuals disappeared. There is now no other party in Britain which expects or receives so much service from its members. The membership of the I.L.P., reflecting its insistence upon the class struggle, is now overwhelmingly working class in character. It is revolutionary in spirit and action as well as in theory, and in a crisis it would be dependable.

Having attained this revolutionary policy and personnel, it becomes a matter of tactics for the I.L.P. so long as it can remain a disciplined unit, whether it enters the Labour Party or continues outside it. If it can best serve the interests of the class struggle and Socialism inside the Labour Party, the duty of the I.L.P. is to seek to renew affiliation. If it can best serve the interests of the class struggle and Socialism outside the Labour Party, its duty is to remain in a position of independence.

It is quite evident that the I.L.P., if it became affiliated, would require the freedom to distinguish itself in the sharpest possible way from the policy of the Labour Party. The I.L.P., whilst prepared to use Parliament to the full, does not accept the Labour Party view that the transition to Socialism can be made through the apparatus of the Capitalist State. The I.L.P. rejects the Labour Party's programme of the gradual transformation of Capitalism to Socialism. It rejects the Labour Party proposals for establishing Public Utility Corporations to take over the Bank of England and the leading industries, instead of socializing them out and out. It rejects the Peace policy of the Labour Party, based on the League of Nations and pacts between Capitalist Governments. It rejects the Labour Party's advocacy of bourgeois democracy as the alternative to Fascism. It rejects the Labour Party's support of Monarchy and its unwillingness to oppose rearmament to defend a Capitalist

State. When the scope of disagreement is so broad, it is obvious that the I.L.P. cannot go into the Labour Party without a clear understanding of its right to differentiate its policy.

The minimum conditions for I.L.P. affiliation to the Labour Party are, in my view, as follows—

1. The I.L.P. should remain an organized unit.
2. The I.L.P. should retain its own newspaper and its right to publish its own literature.
3. The I.L.P. should have the right to voice its own policy on the platform.
4. The I.L.P. should have the right to voice its own policy in Parliament.
5. The I.L.P. should have the right to criticize in a comradely spirit the official policy of the Labour Party and the policy of other sections of the party.

Reaffiliation to the Labour Party would require the I.L.P. to take precautions against the dilution of its membership and policy ; there would be a tendency for recruits to pour in without a genuine acceptance of the Revolutionary Socialist view. The rules of the I.L.P. already require that the Executives of branches shall satisfy themselves regarding the political dependability of applicants for membership ; this rule would have to be applied strictly. The affiliation of the I.L.P. to the Labour Party would only be justified if it retained its Revolutionary Socialist policy and personnel ; if affiliation resulted in a reversion to vagueness and to a departure from the basis of the class struggle it would be a backward step rather than an advance.

But, under present circumstances the discussion as to whether the I.L.P. should affiliate to the Labour Party is probably theoretical. There is little likelihood of the

Labour Party Executive agreeing to the conditions which the I.L.P. would regard as the necessary minimum for affiliation. As in the case of the international working-class organization, the first step towards the unity of the British workers on a genuine federal basis—and this is the only basis which gives hope of unity—is to make the Revolutionary Socialists a formidable force by uniting their ranks and strengthening their influence so that the Reformists will be compelled to recognize them and negotiate a reasonable basis of common action with them. The preliminary to a Workers' Front is to increase the power of the I.L.P. as an independent organization.

The present organization of the British Working-class Movement gives the Reformist sections the maximum of unity and power and the Revolutionary sections the minimum of unity and power. The Reformists are united within the Labour Party. They can dominate it by the block vote undemocratically controlled by the Trade Union leadership. They have everything on their side in the structure of the Labour Party.

But the Revolutionary Socialists are hopelessly divided. Those who are in the Labour Party have been encouraged, despite their fettered conditions, to remain inside the Party because the 1937 Conference granted the Constituency Labour Parties two extra seats on the Executive and a direct vote for the appointment of their representatives, resulting in the election of Stafford Cripps, Harold Laski, D. N. Pritt, and Ellen Wilkinson, who are regarded with varying justification as "Lefts". In fact, however, the power of the Revolutionary Socialists remains as limited as ever. They are still in an insignificant minority on the Labour Party Executive and they cannot hope to alter this in view of the Trade Union Executive control. They are no longer organized as a unit—the Socialist League

which gave an opportunity of this has been destroyed. They are more strongly "disciplined" than ever. They cannot differentiate their attitude from that of the Reformists by any independent action in Parliament. They are pledged not to oppose rearmament under the National Government, and to all the other disastrous official policies of the Labour Party. Thousands of Revolutionary Socialists within the Labour Party are tied hand and foot in this way.

Outside the Labour Party there is the I.L.P. and a number of small groups, whilst many Revolutionary Socialists in their despair are unattached to any organization. *If Revolutionary Socialists allow themselves to remain divided like this they will deserve to fail.* The first necessity for them is to find a basis of unity among themselves. Cannot they get together to discuss methods by which the artificial organizational barriers which now divide them can be broken down ?

I submit that the correct course for Revolutionary Socialists is to unite in one organization and to appeal challengingly to the British workers for support. Only when they have united and built up a strong organization will they be in a position to come to an agreement with the Labour Party leadership regarding terms of affiliation on a federal basis.

If all sections of the British Working-class Movement could function through the Labour Party organized on a federal basis, the advantages would be tremendous both to the working class in their immediate struggles, and to Revolutionary Socialists in the direction of those struggles towards the end of Workers' Power. But the first step towards that is the consolidation of all Revolutionary Socialist forces within one organization so that their maximum influence can be exerted. The I.L.P. offers the one hope of that.

CHAPTER XV

WHY THE UNITY CAMPAIGN FAILED

THE unity of the working class within the framework of the Labour Party was the central purpose of the Unity Campaign conducted by the Socialist League, the I.L.P., and the Communist Party during the first half of 1937. The experience of this Campaign illustrates both the difficulties and dangers of efforts to secure working-class unity. Despite the great mass enthusiasm which accompanied its early stages, the Campaign failed. Why? It is worth while examining both its basis and history in some detail.

The Campaign had a double objective—to bring about unity within the Labour Party and to secure the adoption of a more militant policy by the Labour Party. There were differences between the three participating organizations as regards both the conditions of affiliation to the Labour Party and the programme of immediate action to be urged upon it.

Let us take first the question of the conditions of affiliation. The Socialist League was within the Labour Party. The Communist Party was outside, but was prepared to enter unconditionally. The I.L.P. was outside, and was only prepared to enter on conditions.

During the negotiations which preceded the Campaign, the I.L.P. modified its statement of the circumstances under which it would be ready to apply for affiliation. Previously it had declared that the Constitution of the Party must be democratized and the right of I.L.P. representatives on

public bodies (including Parliament) to vote according to their Socialist principles must be recognized before an application for renewed affiliation could be made. During the Unity Campaign discussions the National Council of the I.L.P. agreed that the Party would reconsider the question of affiliation, not when these changes had actually been made, but as soon as there was reasonable promise that they would be made. James Maxton, the Chairman, declared that he would regard acceptance by the Labour Party Conference of a resolution in favour of unity as indicating that the prospects of securing the desired changes were real.

On the question of the immediate programme the differences between the three parties in the Unity Campaign were greater. The Communist Party produced a programme expressing its own Popular Front policy, including reliance on the League of Nations, peace pacts between Capitalist Governments, support of the foreign policy of Soviet Russia, and the mobilization of all forces to defend democracy against Fascism.

Neither the Socialist League nor the I.L.P. would have this programme. The Socialist League took the same line as the I.L.P. against the Popular Front and a peace policy based on Geneva and Capitalist Government pacts. These items were accordingly omitted. On the question of Russian policy the Socialist League adopted a position midway between the I.L.P. and the Communist Party. It would not urge a League of Nations policy for adoption by the British Working-class Movement, but on the other hand it was not prepared to disassociate itself from Russia in its adoption of that policy. Therefore a vague phrase was left in the document declaring support for Russia's Peace policy, to which the I.L.P. made a reservation.

At one point it appeared as though the negotiations would

break down on this issue. The Communist Party insisted that the I.L.P. should give a pledge to refrain from all criticism of Soviet Russia. The I.L.P. declined, and asked that the I.L.P. reservation should be attached to the phrase in the document of agreement which expressed support for Russia's Peace policy. Although reservations had been included on other matters, the Communist Party absolutely refused to agree to the inclusion in the document of any I.L.P. reservation relating to Russia. It appeared that an impasse had been reached, when it was proposed that the I.L.P. reservation should be put in a letter to Stafford Cripps, the Chairman of the Committee, and that both the Socialist League and the Communist Party should indicate that they concurred in the I.L.P. making it. The I.L.P. delegates accepted this—it did not seem to us to matter where the reservation was made so long as it was on record.

Why this insistence that the I.L.P. reservation about Russian policy should not be included in the actual agreement? I could not escape the conclusion that instructions from Moscow had forbidden the Communist Party to sign any document which permitted I.L.P. criticism of Russia. This conclusion was strengthened when subsequently the Communist Party representatives showed great indignation because the National Council of the I.L.P. incorporated this reservation in its resolution endorsing the Unity Campaign.

There was included in the manifesto another issue on which there was a cleavage of views between the three parties. The Communist Party wished to declare in favour of an immediate pact between Soviet Russia, France, Britain and other countries in which the working class enjoy democratic freedom. This involved advocacy of a pact between the National Government and Russia, to which both the Socialist League and the I.L.P. were opposed. The Socialist

League was ready to support a pact between a British Labour Government, Russia, France and other democratic countries. The I.L.P. was prepared to advocate a pact only between countries with working-class Governments. Reservations defining these three views were included in the agreement.

All three parties declared their opposition to rearmament under the National Government. I notice that Mr. G. D. H. Cole in his book on the *People's Front* suggests that this item in the Unity Campaign programme must have been included to satisfy the I.L.P. In fact, it was endorsed by all three parties, though it was a little difficult both for the Socialist League and I.L.P. representatives to understand how the Communist Party could advocate a pact between the National Government and Russia and still deny rearmament to the National Government.

The agreement allowed the parties freedom to advocate their own policies outside the scope of the joint programme, and permitted the expression of mutual criticism so long as it was uttered and written in the spirit of unity. This left the Communist Party freedom to urge the Popular Front as a supplement to working-class unity, and the Socialist League and the I.L.P. freedom to oppose the Popular Front.

The Campaign began with great spirit and enthusiasm. It is difficult to think of a political agitation in Britain which has drawn greater crowds. Forty thousand workers signed cards pledging their support. Collections reaching hundreds of pounds were taken at the meetings. Yet within six months the spirit and enthusiasm had gone out of the campaign. It became evident that the Labour Party Conference would reject unity by a larger vote than at the Conference the preceding year. What accounted for this collapse?

There were three reasons. A contributing factor was

the acute controversy which arose between the I.L.P. and the Communist Party on the subject of Spain. When in Barcelona the Communist Party and the P.O.U.M. were on opposite sides of the barricades ; when under Communist initiative the P.O.U.M. was suppressed and its leaders imprisoned ; when Andres Nin "disappeared" whilst in the hands of Communist-controlled police ; when the I.L.P. itself and its Chairman, James Maxton, were denounced by Communists as Fascist agents and spies, the disappearance of the spirit of unity between the two organizations became inevitable.

The second reason for the lessened enthusiasm for the Unity Campaign was the effect on the British working class of the Moscow trials and the execution of Russian revolutionary leaders. I took the trouble to make enquiries in all parts of the country to discover the reason for the setback which the cause of unity had received at various Trade Union conferences—the most striking instance was that of the miners, who the previous year had supported unity and this year rejected it—and I was surprised to find how general was the explanation that the series of executions in Russia had turned the workers against association with the Communist Party. This reaction has gone wide and deep into the ranks of the working class.

But the Campaign Committee itself was responsible for the most direct cause of the collapse of the Campaign. The Committee crumpled up in the face of the opposition of the Labour Party Executive, and instinctively the working class felt that conviction and fight had gone out of the Campaign. Let us trace this development.

There was no doubt that the Unity Campaign represented a real mass longing among the working class. Everywhere there was a passionate desire for two things—unity and a

fighting policy. The rank and file did not understand the differences and divisions in the Working-class Movement ; they wanted unity against the National Government, the Capitalist class, Fascism and War. For months preceding the Campaign it had been rare to address a public meeting without the question being put : " Why don't you all get together ? " Equally general was the desire for a fighting policy. The workers were sick of disunity and sick of compromise. When they saw Stafford Cripps, James Maxton and Harry Pollitt on one platform, advocating a programme of vigorous opposition to the National Government, they were filled with new hope.

Then came the first challenge from the Labour Party Executive : the Socialist League would be expelled from the Labour Party if it maintained the Campaign and continued to associate on a common platform with the Communist Party and the I.L.P.

There was a long discussion on the Unity Campaign Committee as to what the response of the Socialist League should be. The Communist Party urged that the Socialist League should prove the sincerity of its desire for unity " within the framework of the Labour Party " by accepting the ultimatum of the Executive and voluntarily dissolving itself. The Socialist League representatives were divided. As one of the I.L.P. representatives I opposed the Communist Party advice, backing those who contended that if the Socialist League liquidated itself it would be surrendering in advance the claim of the I.L.P. and the Communist Party for the right to enter the Labour Party as independent parties.

The argument which finally carried the day for the Communist Party point of view was this : (a) it was desirable, when the challenge came to be made to the Labour Party, that it should be on the widest possible front ; (b)

the Campaign was being supported by prominent members of the Labour Party, including influential Trade Unionists, who were not members of the Socialist League; (c) by dissolving the Socialist League Stafford Cripps and his colleagues could continue to take part in the Campaign as individual members of the Labour Party; (d) if the Labour Party Executive then carried on the heresy hunt, it would have to take disciplinary action against not only Cripps and his Socialist League colleagues, but the Trade Union and other Labour Party spokesmen at the Unity meetings; (e) that would extend the fight to the most favourable ground.

So as a tactical move in the interests of the Unity Campaign the Socialist League was dissolved, and the joint meetings went on, with Stafford Cripps and his colleagues appearing not as representatives of the Socialist League, but as individual members of the Labour Party. The dissolution of the League was explained as a gesture for unity; the continuance of the united Campaign, despite the threats of the Labour Party Executive, was acclaimed as a victory over the opponents of unity. But already something of the spirit of the Campaign was lost. The temperature of the meetings fell. One of the three organizations which initiated the Campaign had been destroyed. There was a feeling that the Unity leaders were on the retreat.

Then came the second ultimatum. George Strauss, a Labour M.P., was advertised to speak at a Unity meeting at Hull with James Maxton and Harry Pollitt. He received a letter from the Labour Party Executive saying that if he fulfilled this engagement he would no longer be regarded as a member of the Labour Party. The challenge had widened out to the broader front exactly as foreseen at the meeting of the Campaign Committee where the decision to dissolve the Socialist League had been reached.

Again the Unity Campaign Committee met. The challenge had come and the Labour Party members of the Committee were ready to accept it. Then the representative of the Communist Party spoke. He explained that in its view it would be a mistake to invite expulsions from the Labour Party. The ultimatum should be obeyed. In future members of the Labour Party should refrain from going on platforms with I.L.P. and Communist Party members. They should speak at meetings with members of the Labour Party only and should serve on Unity Committees with members of the Labour Party only. There should be two parallel campaigns and parallel committees, nationally and locally. One of these campaigns should be run by Labour Party members. The other should be run by Communist Party and I.L.P. members.

I heard this statement with astonishment. It was a complete reversal of the tactic decided upon only a few weeks before when the Socialist League was dissolved; if the Labour Party supporters were now to accept the ultimatum of the Executive, there was no reason why the Socialist League should have been dissolved at all. The League could also have accepted the ultimatum. It was a complete reversal of the tactic which all the members of the Unity Committee had in mind during the early negotiations; the greatest care had been taken in selecting the signatories to the Unity Manifesto in order to avoid the inclusion of anyone who would shirk the issue when the Labour Party began to threaten expulsions. It was a hopeless tactic from a practical standpoint; the Labour Party Executive would certainly see through the device of two parallel committees and campaigns, whilst the political controversy between the I.L.P. and the Communist Party made committees and meetings limited to these two organizations psychologically impossible. It was a disastrous

tactic for the maintenance of the dynamic power of the Unity Campaign, which had its main inspiration in the dramatic demonstration of unity given by the appearance of members of the Labour Party, the I.L.P. and the Communist Party on the same platform. If in future the Labour Party supporters of unity were to refrain from associating with the leaders of the I.L.P. and the Communist Party, the force of this practical proof of unity would be lost. It was clear to me that the Communist Party proposal meant in effect the end of the Unity Campaign.

My reaction was at first the reaction of most of the other members of the Committee, but at the adjourned meeting the following day, Stafford Cripps announced his acceptance of the Communist Party proposal so far as it related to the Labour Party supporters of the Campaign, and it was accepted.

It is fair to Stafford Cripps to say that I gathered the impression that the acute controversy between the I.L.P. and the Communist Party on the Spanish issue had a good deal to do with his decision. He might have been willing to face expulsion from the Labour Party if he had felt that a real spirit of unity existed between the three sections participating in the campaign, but when two of them were engaged in fierce dispute he probably came to the conclusion that the sacrifice would not be justified.

From this point onwards the Unity Campaign was conducted by Committees and platforms representing Labour Party members only; the I.L.P. and Communist Party representatives withdrew, although the two parties continued to give independent support. Nothing more was heard of the suggestions that the I.L.P. and the Communist Party should simultaneously run a parallel campaign. A few meetings were held under the auspices of the Labour

Party Unity Committees ; but the campaign as a campaign was dead.

That is the story of the Unity Campaign. What are its lessons ?

From the beginning of the negotiations which preceded the Campaign two ideas came into conflict. The first idea was that the Campaign involved the three parties seeking to bring their political policies into line with each other. Under the influence of this conception the I.L.P. was urged to cease its criticism of Soviet Russia's foreign policy, and the Communist Party its advocacy of the Popular Front. One of the Socialist League representatives begged both the I.L.P. and the Communist Party to forget the P.O.U.M. and the issues related to it. The suggestion was even made that before the Annual Conferences of the three Parties were reached, the drive of the campaign would have become so powerful that a joint conference might be held for the unification of their organizations.

I never held this conception of the Unity Campaign or its results. I would not give any undertaking to put on one side criticism of Russian policy ; I did not join in any appeal to the Communist Party to put on one side its propaganda for the Popular Front. I took the view that the advocacy of policies sincerely held was absolutely essential to the Movement as a whole and to the health of the Unity Campaign itself, and I urged the utmost liberty of action on issues where there was not agreement between the three parties. I saw that an appearance of unreal unity on issues about which we disagreed would be disastrous to the realization of real unity on the issues about which we were agreed.

I believe that if such a natural and sincere basis of common action between the Socialist League, the I.L.P.,

and the Communist Party had been made clear from the beginning, the final disillusionment and collapse need not have occurred. We could still have urged the imperative necessity of the unity of the whole Working-class Movement on agreed class issues. We could still have urged the need for all working-class parties to be within the federal framework of the Labour Party, and the democratization of its structure to facilitate this. We could still have put forward a programme on the immediate working-class demands which would have stimulated a fighting spirit—such demands as the seizure of the opportunity provided by the trade recovery and the rearmament programme for the Trade Union Movement to make big drives for higher wages, the forty-hour week, holidays with pay, and recognition of workshop committees and shop-stewards appointed by them; the abolition of the Means Test, the withdrawal of the Anomalies Act, and higher allowances for the unemployed; opposition to the Fascist tendencies of the National Government, such as the militarization of the police force, the Sedition Act, the Public Order Act, etc. These demands would not have constituted a programme; they would not have included international policy because on immediate issues in that sphere agreement between the three parties did not exist; they need not have included proposals for socialization, since the Communist Party wished to keep these in the background. They would have been limited frankly to immediate class issues upon which there was complete agreement, leaving to the Parties the duty to supplement them with their full political philosophies and programmes.

The Socialist League representatives on the Unity Campaign Committee were the leading advocates of the conception that the three parties should modify or hide their policies in order to give the fullest appearance of

unity. I pay my tribute to the persuasiveness, patience and persistence with which Stafford Cripps and his colleagues performed their difficult task; without them the Unity Campaign negotiations would never have resulted in a Unity Campaign. But I am convinced they made a profound mistake in attempting to suppress expressions of genuine political differences and in declining to face up to issues involved in controversies which were shaking the working-class movement in every part of the world. I have already mentioned the issue of Spain; the Moscow Trials raised another issue which thrust itself into prominence during the Unity Campaign. For the sake of unity the Socialist League would have liked the I.L.P. to remain silent on this matter, despite its immense significance in relation to Soviet Russia and the international movement. The Socialist League leaders went dangerously near to the attitude of unity at any price. If issues arose which threatened to divide them from the Communist Party they remained silent.

If the Unity Campaign had been limited to the double objective of (a) creating the conditions under which all working-class sections could federate within the Labour Party and (b) arousing support for a series of agreed demands as a basis of an immediate militant struggle, its whole course might have been different. The Spanish and Moscow Trial controversies between the I.L.P. and the Communist Party would not have affected the purpose of such a campaign. Indeed, emphasis would have been added to the appeal for maximum common action on *agreed* issues by demonstrating that the three parties maintained their recognition of its necessity *despite their differences*. The campaign would have been lifted above the conception of unity between the Socialist League, the I.L.P. and the Communist Party to the conception of the maximum unity

of the whole working-class. In these circumstances it would have been much more difficult for the Labour Party to issue ultimatums or to carry them to extremes. The slogans: "Unity to defeat the National Government! Unity of all sections of the working class on every issue about which we are agreed!"—these would have maintained enthusiasm and would have continued to sweep the mass of workers behind them.

Attention would no doubt have been drawn to the omission of War and Fascism from the subjects covered by the agreed demands. The answer should have been given frankly that, whilst the three parties were united in opposing the War preparations and Fascist tendencies of the National Government, they held divergent views in regard to international policy and proposed that these should be discussed before the whole Working-class Movement; meanwhile, differences on international issues should not prevent all working-class sections from uniting on the issues at home about which they were agreed.

This would have been an honest attitude. It would not have misled the workers; it would have made them face up to the reality. The differences acknowledged could not have been used as an argument for keeping the I.L.P. and the Communist Party outside the Labour Party, because exactly the same differences were known to exist within the Labour Party. The whole case would have been thrust back on the central object: let us find a basis of common action by the whole of the working class despite our differences.

No doubt the point would still have been reached in this campaign when the Labour Party Executive would have threatened the Socialist League with expulsion. When that situation arose, the correct tactic should have been discussed from the points of view of the immediate situation and of the general objective of the campaign.

If mass support were sufficiently great, then the challenge of the Executive could have been accepted. The expulsion of the Socialist League and Stafford Cripps would have aroused a fierce conflict within the Labour Party, and would have made the campaign the dominant issue within the Labour Party. There would have been a strongly held view among the rank and file that the expulsion of the League and its leaders showed that the Labour Party Executive was responsible for the division of the working class and its disruption. The Executive would have been placed on the defensive, and at the Annual Conference the presence of Stafford Cripps in the gallery would have been more effective even than on the rostrum.

That was one course that could have been taken. If support for the campaign did not justify this, then the other line could have been adopted—Socialist League and Labour Party participants would withdraw from joint platforms with the I.L.P. and the C.P., but the three parties would continue to conduct through their platform propaganda and press independent campaigns for the common object of working-class unity, including an interchange of messages and articles from the leaders, which would have maintained the sense of co-operation. It is true that this would have involved the loss of the inspiration of Stafford Cripps, James Maxton and Harry Pollitt on one platform, but if the spirit of the united objective had remained, the technical method of its expression would not have been so serious.

The fatal feature of the collapse of the Unity Campaign was the fact that the spirit of unity did not remain. This was due, as we have shown, to the effort to extend the unity beyond its genuine and spontaneous basis. The result was that when the opportunity to terminate the campaign came, it was received by many in the three parties with relief.

Owing to the wrong conception of the campaign from the outset, they had got into the sectarian frame of mind of regarding it in the terms of the three sections rather than of the whole of the working-class. Had the campaign been concentrated upon federal unity of the working class within a democratized Labour Party and a common advocacy of demands for which there was a whole-hearted enthusiasm, the propaganda for it would have gone on among the mass of the workers despite the efforts of the Labour Party Executive to crush it.

One decision would certainly not have been made—the decision to dissolve the Socialist League. The League was unnecessarily killed, and its dissolution was a greater blow to the cause of federal unity within the Labour Party than anything positive achieved by the Unity Campaign. The Socialist League was holding the fort of an organized Left section within the Labour Party. The reactionary Labour Party Executive members rejoiced at its decease, and its disappearance will make far more difficult the re-attainment of the right to have organized Left sections within the Labour Party.

I don't know whether the Communist Party deliberately aimed at the destruction of the Socialist League. I know only that if the Socialist League membership had foreseen that the Labour Party ultimatum would be accepted at the second challenge, it would never have consented to the dissolution. Did the Communist Party regard the Socialist League as a potential rival? I cannot say; but the fact remains that it was Communist Party influence which destroyed it.

We must now face the position as it is left by the collapse of the Unity Campaign. The Labour Party Conference has rejected the unity proposals by a larger majority than a year ago. What next?

I have no doubt that the severer rebuff given to unity at the 1937 conference was due to increased opposition to the Communist Party. In these circumstances the I.L.P. should ask itself whether it would not be wiser to make any further approaches for united action with the Labour Party independently of the Communist Party.

In the past proposals by the I.L.P. for united action with the Labour Party have been made in conjunction with the Communist Party. It is my conviction that this has prejudiced and not strengthened the proposals. Despite the fact that I.L.P. policy is now more divergent from that of the Labour Party than Communist Party policy, antagonism to the I.L.P. is much less in Labour Party ranks. The memory of the traditional association of the I.L.P. with the Labour Party remains; there is a general feeling in the Labour Party now that the I.L.P. was correct in opposing the MacDonald-led policy of the Labour Government of 1929-31; the I.L.P. leadership and membership, both locally and nationally, are trusted as honest and straight; and there is not the complication, as in the case of the Communist Party, of obedience to instructions from an external subsidizing authority. If, therefore, the I.L.P. comes to the conclusion that an application for affiliation to the Labour Party on the conditions suggested earlier should be made, experience points to the desirability of the approach being made irrespective of the Communist Party.

Whether the I.L.P. decides to reopen the question of Labour Party affiliation or not, it should pursue a policy of facilitating common action with the Labour Party on agreed issues. This should be done in the localities by fighting side by side with the local Labour Party on working-class issues as they arise. It should be done nationally, not only in all the platform and the press work of the Party,

but in Parliament, by emphasizing common hostility to the National Government and unity on every agreed issue. In particular, preparations should be made for an understanding at the next General Election. Whatever happens on the question of affiliation, there should be no conflicting I.L.P. and Labour Party candidates who would facilitate the victory of the National Government. The I.L.P. has made the offer more than once to the Labour Party to reach an electoral agreement. It is to be hoped that a way will be found of overcoming the difficulties which stand in the way.

A united front of the entire working class could be realized at the General Election without any sacrifice of principle or policy. Despite the acute controversy between the I.L.P. and the Communist Party, acceptance of the basis of the class struggle makes it desirable that the Communists should not be excluded. The Labour Party, the I.L.P., the Communist Party would say to each other: "We all want to defeat the National Government; we all support many immediate working-class demands; we do not want to prejudice our chances by fighting each other; we will therefore form a Workers' Front for the election, supporting the working-class candidates most likely to win; we will do this without compromising our policy, our future action, or each other."

It is possible that the Labour Party might be tempted to regard an electoral agreement of little importance because of the limited number of constituencies in which the I.L.P. or Communist Party has a determining influence. There are probably only six or seven constituencies where the I.L.P. could claim that its candidate stood more chance than a Labour Party candidate and where accordingly it would expect the Labour Party to refrain from nominating a candidate. There is only one constituency where the Communist Party could expect the Labour Party to withdraw its

candidate under the arrangement proposed. Under such circumstances there might be a tendency in the Labour Party to ignore the I.L.P. and Communist Party as of no electoral significance.

But this conclusion would overlook two things. There may be less than ten constituencies out of six hundred where the I.L.P. and the C.P. are dominant in the working class, but in many of the 590 remaining constituencies members and supporters of the I.L.P. and C.P. are active, able and enthusiastic workers and their assistance during an election contest would be of considerable value.

Still more important would be the psychological effect of working-class unity at the election. It would bring a new note of challenge and inspiration into the contest, and would provide a dynamic power which would go far towards sweeping the workers to victory.

There are faint hearts in the Labour Party who would argue that an agreement with the I.L.P. and the C.P. would frighten timid electors and lose more votes than it would gain. Even if this were so, Labour Party victories on the basis of timid votes would be of little working-class value. But in fact, experience, such as the L.C.C. elections of 1937, shows that this fear is exaggerated. The inspiration of working-class unity wins more votes than are lost by the fear of revolutionary associates.

But even if an electoral agreement were reached, it would still be necessary for Revolutionary Socialists to maintain undimmed their policy of the class struggle and of no Capitalist collaboration or national unity. Silence on the fundamental principles of the Workers' Front would be too heavy a price to pay for the realization of the mere shell of the Workers' Front.

CHAPTER XVI

TOWARDS A WORKERS' FRONT IN BRITAIN

PROPOSALS are being made for a Popular Front to bring about the defeat of the National Government at the General Election. There is no need to state the Socialist case against these proposals ; a large part of this book has dealt with the disasters which have followed the Popular Front in other countries. The same disasters would be inevitable in Britain, because the Popular Front, by its very basis of an alliance with sections of the Capitalist class, involves the surrender of the class struggle and the fight for Socialism. This was indicated at the initial meeting of the British Popular Front Movement. A Liberal Member of Parliament appealed for a truce in the struggle between "worker and boss" in order that unity against Fascism might be achieved !

In France and in Spain there was a case for a purely electoral understanding with the Liberal Parties because of the system of second ballots at the elections ; but in Britain even that case does not exist. Any understanding with the Liberal Party would have to apply to the one ballot, and that would mean from the outset a compromising agreement with the Liberals which would tie the hands of the working-class candidates in voicing the demands of the class struggle and of Socialism.

I not propose here to discuss the suggested programme of the British Popular Front. It is a British edition of the

French programme, and would take the working class no further. It is bad enough to have the Labour Party and the Communist Party pledged to international policies which repudiate class action and identify the working class with the Capitalist League of Nations and Capitalist Governments. An alliance with the Liberal Party would not only fasten these policies more firmly on the working class ; it would undermine the class struggle at home against British Capitalism as well.

But in rejecting the Popular Front we must be clear as to the meaning of the Workers' Front. In order to be concrete I put it in a series of propositions :

1. All sections of the working-class should appoint representatives to meet for the purpose of drawing up the maximum list of demands on which they are sincerely united.

2. This list of demands should then be made the basis of a united campaign in the country and of united action in Parliament and on local authorities.

3. There should be no attempt to hide the fact that there are differences on certain issues, and the different sections should have full freedom to express through their own press and on their own platforms the policies which they advocate on these issues. This freedom should include the right to criticize the policy of other sections, but such criticism should be expressed in the spirit of class unity.

4. The different sections should take common action, both locally and nationally, whenever class issues (such as industrial disputes or unemployed agitations) arise upon which they are united. The Workers' Front should mean unity in action in the working-class struggle.

5. The representatives of the different sections should survey the constituencies throughout the country with a view to avoiding conflicting candidatures and should agree in all cases to support the working-class candidates most likely to defeat the candidates of the Capitalist Parties. Representatives should meet similarly in the localities to avoid conflicting candidatures in municipal and county elections.

6. The discussions should proceed from the above points to a consideration of the establishment of a continuing structure of co-operation, either by (a) the development of the Labour Party on a democratic federal basis or (b) the appointment of permanent national and local Workers' Front Committees representative of all sections of the working-class.

7. Whilst the Workers' Front would reject all alliances with Capitalist Parties or organizations, it would recognize the identity of interest of the petty bourgeoisie (the lower middle class) with the working-class and its importance in the struggle against Capitalism. It would definitely seek to win the support of the petty bourgeoisie by expressing its grievances under Capitalism, always relating them to the general struggle against Capitalism.

8. The campaign of the Workers' Front on immediate demands should be linked up with fundamental Socialist principles expressed in slogans directing the mind of the working-class and the petty bourgeoisie to the final purpose of the struggle.

The realization of united action on these lines would be a definite advance towards class solidarity and this would in itself encourage a return to the basis of the class struggle. But one must admit that the extent to which the Labour Party, whilst rejecting the basis of the Popular Front, has succumbed to its political programme makes even a united working-class front with it difficult of acceptance by Revolutionary Socialists. Let us face this difficulty squarely on the most critical issue, the issue of war, which is also the issue where the sharpest divergence of policy exists.

The policy of the Labour Party on War and Rearmament means a complete surrender to the attitude of "social-patriotism". It regards Fascism, not Capitalism, as the enemy, and would give enthusiastic support for a war to defend British Capitalism, with its Fascist-governed Empire, against Fascist Germany and Italy.

So far the British Labour Party has not voted for the rearmament programme of the National Government; it has only refrained from opposing it. But the logic of its

policy can scarcely allow it to remain in this indefinite position. It has often been the boast of British statesmen that party politics do not enter the sphere of foreign affairs, and that, whatever the government, there is continuity of policy. The only difference that would accompany the return of a Labour Government would be a sharpening of the existing hostility to the Fascist Powers. The motive of the National Government is Imperialist; the motive of a Labour Government would be "democratic"; but the effect would be the same.

Revolutionary Socialists would be willing to arm and defend a Working-class or Socialist State, but they would not be prepared to defend one Capitalist State against another. If the British Empire with its millions of half-starved and politically and economically enslaved native peoples, came into conflict with Fascist Germany, Revolutionary Socialists would regard it as their duty not to fight for the one or the other, but instead to prepare for the first opportunity when the Capitalist regimes of both could be overthrown by social revolution and the seizure of workers' power.

Normally one would say that it was the duty of workers to defend a State under a working-class government, but the British Labour Party has departed so far from the Socialist position that the fact must now be faced that a war conducted by a British Labour Government would be different in no essential respect from a war conducted by a British Capitalist Government. A Labour Government would conduct a war not to defend a Workers' State, but "King and Country", not Socialist (or even prospectively Socialist) institutions, but British institutions.

One can be fairly confident that if Britain began a war under a Labour Government it would not be long before a new National Government, including representatives of Conservatism, Liberalism and Labour, would be formed to

reflect the national unity of all classes for the successful prosecution of the war. The "social-patriotism" of 1914-18 would have advanced a stage further. Then Labour fell in with "social-patriotism" on the invitation of a Capitalist Government. In the new circumstances the Capitalist Parties would fall in with "social-patriotism" on the invitation of a Labour Government.

Such a situation would of course require independence of action by Revolutionary Socialists. From the first the press and spokesmen of a revolutionary Party like the I.L.P. would have to come out boldly; they would have to do this whether federated to the Labour Party or not—it would be one of those occasions when a break would have to be risked. They would of course have to face suppression, but experience has shown that the most rigorous repression cannot destroy. Its members would not be encouraged to adopt merely a negative "against-the-war" attitude; they would be instructed and stimulated to develop the class struggle—in factories, munition works, on housing estates, in the armed forces. The war of 1914-18 showed the opportunity of arousing class feeling and action on wage issues, on control within the workshops, on questions of rents and food prices, on profiteering, on soldiers' and sailors' grievances. As war-weariness increased, as social chaos grew, as disillusionment extended, the opportunity for social revolution would come. Class struggle would overtake "social-patriotism".

Whatever governments begin the next World War—Capitalist, Popular Front, Social Democratic or Labour Party—we can look forward with confidence to Workers' Governments, Soviets of Workers and Soldiers, ending it throughout Europe, ending it not to vindicate the liberties of bourgeois democracy over Fascism or to exalt the British and French Empires over the Fascist Powers, but to express

the determination of the masses to stop the slaughter and starvation, and with them the system of Capitalism which let them loose on the world. Should the social revolution take place in one country before others, it would be the duty of the Workers' Government of that country to go to the assistance of Soviet Russia or any other Workers' Governments and to encourage the workers who remained under Capitalist Governments to join in the international social revolution.

This divergence in war policy makes one pause before advocating a united front with the Labour Party even on agreed issues; *nevertheless, it is a correct policy from a Revolutionary Socialist point of view.* The Labour Party is the mass party of the British working class. Class action must include the workers' organizations which are a part of the Labour Party and Revolutionary Socialists must act in contact with them and through them. Otherwise they will be hopelessly isolated, whether it be in peace-time or war-time. Co-operation with the mass Party preceding the war situation would have increased the contacts and influence of the Revolutionary Socialists and would contribute towards lessening their isolation in the war crisis. The one essential feature of such co-operation must be liberty to maintain the Revolutionary Socialist view and to give the Revolutionary Socialist lead.

The problem of united action with the Communist Party is still more difficult. Since the collapse of the Unity Campaign there has been a tendency for Revolutionary Socialists to refuse all co-operation with the Communists. How can we act with a Party which vilifies and imprisons our comrades in Spain? they ask. That attitude would be justified if there were any proposal for an alliance with the Communist Party or for common action with it alone. But the tactic of the Workers' Front is much bigger in scope

than that. It aims at common action by all sections of the working class, and any co-operation with the Communist Party on agreed issues would be incidental to that.

Because of the undeveloped position in Britain which does not allow the Popular Front to become practical politics at the moment, the British Communists are at present in the transition stage between class struggle and class collaboration. They maintain a reputation for militant leadership on industrial and social issues, but at the same time they prepare for a Popular Front with "democratic" Capitalists which would inevitably be an influence against militancy. Their main instrument for advocating the Popular Front is the Left Book Club, which is a clever device to use a sympathetic and enterprising publisher for the purpose of influencing the large class of readers who are interested in "Left" questions, and particularly middle-class intellectuals, towards the Popular Front position.

The Popular Front propaganda is already having a considerable effect on the type of membership of the Communist Party. A few years ago the I.L.P. was regarded as middle-class, and the Communist Party proletarian. Now the position is becoming reversed. In London especially the recruits to the Communist Party are largely from the middle class, and in many parts of the country the tendency is for anti-Fascists, and particularly Jewish anti-Fascists, to join the Party irrespective of its ultimate purpose. The tests and periods of probation which used to be imposed, in order to make certain of the revolutionary dependability of new members, have been modified almost to the point of disappearance. In Britain the tendency has not gone so far as in countries where the Popular Front is in operation, but everywhere the result of the departure from the class

struggle and revolutionary line is the same—the Communist Party itself, in its personnel and class type, is becoming incapable of the task of the revolution.

Nevertheless, because the C.P. in Britain has not yet reached the stage of alliance with Liberal Capitalist sections, it is able, despite its political tendency, to participate aggressively in the class struggle in many of its phases. It may decide to organize London's May Day under the slogan: "For Peace, Democracy and Social Progress" and to invite Liberals to participate, but when the bus strike breaks out on May Day its speakers forget their slogan and concentrate on winning support for the busmen in their class struggle. It may advocate a pact between the National Government and Soviet Russia against Germany, but nevertheless its member of Parliament votes against re-armament. The logical sequence of its policy may be national unity and social patriotism against Germany, but it boldly flouts patriotic emotions on the subject of monarchy. It may compromise on many things in order to win the favour of Labour leaders with the object of getting into the Labour Party, but it nevertheless vigorously supports the rank-and-file of the Trade Union Movement when they defy their leaders by taking unofficial strike action. With all its faults, their organ, the *Daily Worker*, reflects the militant aspects of the class struggle of the workers in industry and of the unemployed, and in many localities Communists are playing a leading part in every class fight, whether the issue be wages, working conditions, unemployment allowances, relief or rents.

On these issues and in these struggles it is the duty of Revolutionary Socialists to co-operate with the Communists, despite the bitterness of political controversy. The question should always be: Is this an expression of the class struggle? If it is, the Revolutionary Socialist must participate

and he must be ready to take common action with any section of the working class to secure a workers' victory. Needless to say, he will never have any delusions about Communist Party policy, will never commit himself to a basis of co-operation requiring a compromise on fundamentals, and will always maintain the safeguard of liberty of discussion and criticism.

So far we have discussed the question of Revolutionary Socialist co-operation with other political sections. Of even greater importance is activity in the Trade Union Movement. In the industrial sphere there is less exclusiveness than in the political, though there have been recent cases of penalization of militants which are danger signals.

In a revolutionary crisis—such as we have visualized under war conditions—direct action must be taken, and the Trades Unions are the instrument of direct action. To achieve the social revolution the organs of the working class must be used to win Workers' Power, and the Trades Unions are the nucleus of such working-class organs. Therefore it is imperative that Revolutionary Socialists should function ceaselessly within the Trades Unions. They should take their part in every activity, doing the hard day-to-day drudgery work as well as more spectacular things, serving as local officials wherever possible, developing a healthy self-reliant feeling among the rank-and-file, encouraging a militant spirit and a sense of class solidarity, resisting every attack on working-class standards and liberties, stimulating a general demand for improvements, forming workshop committees and gaining the confidence of their workmates so that they are appointed shop-stewards, advocating democracy within the Unions, seizing every opportunity to extend their influence and to secure leadership.

Such activity is more essential even than activity within the political movement, and a revolutionary party should

direct a large section of its membership to concentrate upon it. It is a welcome development that the supreme importance of organized Trade Union activity is now more fully recognized in the I.L.P.

Similar work must be done by Revolutionary Socialists in the Co-operative Movement and the Co-operative Party. The Co-operative Movement has few revolutionary characteristics at present, but it could be of great value as an economic arm of the social revolution, and its Guilds and educational activities provide a useful sphere for immediate work. The Co-operative Party has limited political significance, but in many parts of the country its Political Councils are lively centres of discussion and activity and its affiliated membership is actually greater than that of the Labour Party, whilst its potential financial resources are very large. There is also this interesting point about the Co-operative Party: its relationship to the Labour Party represents in principle the kind of alliance which has been advocated here for an all-in Working-class Federation. The Co-operative Party acts in close association with the Labour Party, but it retains the liberty to take independent action on issues upon which it differs from the Labour Party.

Before leaving organizational questions, reference must be made to the Youth Movement in Britain. The idea of a Youth Movement has never caught on in Britain to the same extent as in Europe, but nevertheless it is of significance in preparing the coming generation for the struggles ahead. There have been three political Youth Sections attached to the working class—the Labour League of Youth (Labour Party), the I.L.P. Guild of Youth, and the Young Communist League. All have had a stormy and varying existence.

The Labour League of Youth has come into conflict

with its parent body by insistence upon participation in political discussion and by the militant trend these discussions have reflected. The Labour Party leadership did not want a political Youth movement; it wanted to provide social centres for youth, so that they might grow up in the atmosphere of the Party and become its supporters. When the League of Youth showed more self-reliance and began to express itself politically, the leadership reduced its maximum age and limited its functions. Whilst keen young Socialist politicians remain in the League and it offers scope for activity, its power to give leadership to Youth has gone.

The Young Communist League, applying the political theory of the Party, is attempting to broaden itself out on a Popular Front basis, dropping its class and revolutionary character and endeavouring to unite all who take the "democratic" line on the issues of War and Fascism. This change has not pleased all its members.

The I.L.P. Guild of Youth strongly opposes the Communist Party proposal for the unification of the Youth Movement on a non-class-struggle basis and advocates federal unity on lines similar to those advocated by its parent party for the adult movement. The Guild would include the Co-operative Comrades' Circles in this Federation; it is not so markedly political as the three Youth sections which we have been discussing, but on certain issues is prepared to take common action.

The I.L.P. Guild of Youth, after being almost destroyed in turn by Communists and Trotskyists, is now building up well on a clear-cut revolutionary policy. It has a splendid personnel, of a new type in the British Working-class Movement. Never before have young Socialists consciously trained themselves as revolutionary. The first generation of young Socialists were Utopians. The second generation

were Parliamentarians. The present generation, when they have not been spoiled by Labour Party or Communist Party compromises, are of the stuff of which the social revolution will be made. They are to be found, preparing, studying, working, in the I.L.P. Guild of Youth.

It will be noticed that the concrete proposals made at the beginning of this chapter for a Workers' Front include a deliberate approach to the middle class. We must not allow our opposition to an alliance with bourgeois Parties to make us indifferent to the fate of the middle class or lacking in appreciation of its importance. The Working-class Movement owes much to Socialists who have come from the middle class, and the part the middle class plays in the clash between the working class and the Capitalist class will be of great significance.

But it is the clash between the working class and the Capitalist class which represents the basic struggle. These are the two forces fighting for supremacy, representing different philosophies and systems and clothing them in different programmes. The middle class has no dynamic, creative power in this conflict, which advances remorselessly upon it from both sides. It has no distinctive philosophy; it cannot stand for any system alternative to Capitalism or Socialism; it cannot have a distinctive programme. Liberalism provided the middle class with a philosophy and with something in the nature of a programme during the period of its emergence and advance following the industrial revolution; but with the coming of big-scale Capitalism—monopolies and trusts and finance-Capital—that period passed. The ground was cleared for the struggle between private ownership and community ownership, between a system in which a few live by owning and the many by working—a class society—and a classless society in which all own in common and all work.

The middle class must take sides in this struggle; otherwise it will be crushed in no-man's-land. Whilst Capitalism is stable and the Capitalist forces are dominant, it will tend to look to the Capitalist class for security and opportunity; but as Capitalism shakes and trembles, as the conflict is joined, the middle class will hesitate and turn to the side which proves itself most capable of winning and using power. It will turn towards Fascism, the strong arm of Capitalism, or towards Socialism—if the forces of Socialism prove themselves strong.

The last way to win the middle class is to compromise with Capitalism. To encourage them to associate with the working class by surrendering Socialism for "democratic" Capitalism—that is by throwing over the distinctive creative programme of the working class and adopting the dying philosophy of the middle class—this course may win the support of a certain section of the middle class for a time, but only for a time, and, as the crisis develops, such allies will prove worthless in the struggle because they will not have been steeled to its true character. The only way to bring reliable middle-class recruits into the working-class movement is by convincing them of the necessity, not merely to associate with the working class in the defence of "democracy", but to identify themselves with the working class in the class struggle. A merely defensive, compromising policy will thrust the middle class on the Fascist side, because there it will see boldness, initiative and dynamic power. The boldness, initiative and dynamic power of Revolutionary Socialism can alone stand up to Fascism.

The middle-class, and particularly the lower middle-class, suffer from bitter grievances within Capitalisms. They also experience insecurity and the burden of high prices and rents; taxation falls on them heavily compared with the possessing class; the bankers and financiers

exploit them ; in a period of trade depression unemployment invades their homes and often they are not covered by any system of insurance ; the fear of war haunts them. These grievances unite the middle-class with the working-class, and the Workers' Front should give a prominent place to them in its campaign. The duty of Revolutionary Socialists is to attract the middle-class behind the banner of Socialism. We should do this for the advantage both of the middle-class and of the working-class, to whom the middle-class may be either dangerous enemies or valuable allies. The Workers' Front would approach the middle class, not by compromising the class struggle and Socialism in order to win the Liberal Party as an ally, but by showing to the middle-class that their place is with the working class in the struggle against Capitalism.

The Revolutionary Socialist will not regard the Workers' Front as sufficient in itself. An alliance is always limited to the scope of its least advanced section. The Popular Front is limited to Capitalist reforms because it includes the Liberal Party. The Workers' Front must be limited by the political outlooks of the Labour and Communist Parties. Its soundness would lie in its basis of class-organization, in its expression of class solidarity and in its experience of class-action. Upon this structure a revolutionary force could be developed.

But only if Revolutionary Socialists through their own organization give the working-class a lead. Through the Workers' Front they would make contact with the mass working-class. Through their own organization they must give revolutionary direction.

The Workers' Front as visualized at the beginning of this chapter would be Marxist in its class basis, but it would not be Marxist in its policy. Its major section

would have to be won from its attitude of class collaboration and loyalty to the Capitalist State. The Workers' Front will not be Marxist in both composition and conviction until all its sections reject alliance with the Capitalist class, both in peace and war, reject national unity, reject the Capitalist State as an instrument of emancipation, recognize that the Workers' Front itself, as the united organ of the working-class, is the only instrument for the achievement of the liberation of the workers.

This brings us back to the point to which we are always driven—that it is imperative that Revolutionary Socialists themselves should be organized compactly within a Party which will ceaselessly keep alive, in agitation and action, the fire of the class struggle and the social revolution. Such unity of Revolutionary Socialists is necessary, as we have seen, to secure the establishment of the Workers' Front—the Reformist sections of the working class will not consider united action until Revolutionary Socialists, united themselves, can exert the necessary pressure. But the organization of Revolutionary Socialists as a unit within the working-class movement would be no less necessary when the Workers' Front had been formed. That is the case for the I.L.P. Without it there is no guarantee that the Workers' Front will become a *Revolutionary Workers' Front*, will go forward to realize the Socialist end for which it is the instrument.

What hope is there of creating not only a Workers' Front, but a Revolutionary Workers' Front in Britain? Immediately, not much; one looks forward with apprehension to war and to the official Labour Movement supporting that war. One may be confident that the war will end in social revolution, but that will only be at a cost of millions of lives, victims not only of Capitalism, but of the failure of the working-class movement to destroy Capitalism before it moves on to its final disaster.

But there is this good ground for hope. The working-class movement may go wrong because it repudiates the class struggle, the workers themselves may be misled and go wrong. Nevertheless, they instinctively act on a class basis when the issue is clear, and when they do, they show a solidarity and determination which are an inspiration. They may now be misled by the combined Labour Party and Communist Party appeal for collaboration with the Capitalist class in defence of the Capitalist State, but objective conditions will arise which will throw up the class issue so plainly that they will unhesitatingly line up with those who give them a clear class lead.

The crisis which would develop during a war or at its end would provide those conditions; but not only a war crisis. It is just possible that the gathering forces of war will disperse without the outbreak of immediate hostilities on a world scale. Then the alternative will be economic crisis.

Already the General Council of the Trades Union Congress is issuing its plans to prevent the threatened slump—as though slumps can be prevented within Capitalism! All the plans for public works schemes and more “generous” allowances for its victims will not prevent the coming of a further economic crisis of Capitalism—a crisis which will almost certainly be deeper and more prolonged than the last. Then attacks on wages and working conditions will begin; then the Capitalist class will seek to make the workers bear the main burden of the depression by imposing cuts on unemployment allowances and social services. Will the working class again follow its leaders in the acceptance of these sacrifices to save Capitalism?

One doubts it; but whether it happens again or not, the moment will without doubt come when the workers will unite on a class basis to fight Capitalism and the Capitalist State, when they will rely on themselves and their

own organizations, when they will brush impatiently aside all advice to compromise with their class enemies or to rely on the institutions which those enemies have set up for the defence of Capitalism.

Despite the black outlook of the present period, it is impossible to believe that the working masses of Britain and the world will be content during this twentieth century, when science has provided us with the opportunity of a life not merely of sufficiency and comfort, but of almost limitless expansion in knowledge and experience—in such a world it is impossible to believe that the workers will be satisfied to continue for any long period with a starved existence of poverty and subjection. But that will be their existence as long as Capitalism continues, and Capitalism will continue as long as the workers co-operate with the Capitalist class to maintain it.

A Workers' Front that has become a Revolutionary Workers' Front—the unity of all sections of the working class on a class basis to carry on the class struggle against Capitalism—there lies our only hope. To-day the workers may turn from it to Popular Fronts and class collaboration ; to-morrow they will turn to it, because it is instinctive for those who suffer in common to fight in common, and as the cause of the suffering and the enemy of the sufferers become clear, that instinct will sweep aside all whose policies do not give it expression.

Meanwhile, it is the duty of Revolutionary Socialists to hasten that to-morrow. They will succeed as they combine unity among themselves and common action with the mass of the working class, and with it the liberty to give a clear lead, based always on the class struggle and moving always towards the Social Revolution.

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